A HISTORY of AFGHANISTAN

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FOREWORD

This book examines the history of Afghanistan since prehistoric times. It would not have been written at all if the authors had not drawn upon the research done by their predecessors and by their colleagues in the Soviet Union and abroad, especially, in Afghanistan. Occasionally they summed up their own Afghan studies.

The first publications on Afghanistan, appearing in Russia in the early 18th century, told the readers about the country and its population, the events in the Herat and Qandahar regions and their struggle against the troops of Nadir Shah Afshar. Several works on Durrani, the first sovereign state to include all the territories populated by Afghans, on Ahmad Shah Durrani, the founder of the state, and his successors, and on Russo-Afghan trade were written and published in Russia in the middle and the latter half of the 18th century.

However, it was with the publication of the works by Academician B.A. Dorn in 1829-1838 that a genuinely scientific study of Afghanistan began in Russia. B. A. Dorn was the first to make research into the history of the Pashtun people and his studies retain their value to this day.

In the middle and the second half of the 19th century prominent Russian Orientalists V. V. Grigoryev, N. V. Khanykov, L. N. Sobolev, M. I. Venyukov, N. A. Aristov, and S. N. Yuzhakov, to mention a few, conducted studies into the ancient and medieval history of Afghanistan, the origin of its peoples, the social make-up of the Pashtun society, its customs and traditions, the people's struggle for freedom and independence, and Anglo-Afghan relations. At the turn of the 20th century an extensive study of Afghanistan was conducted by A. E. Snesarev, M. V. Grulev and A. A. Bobrinsky. Academician V. V. Barthold did a great deal of research on Afghan history and culture.

The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia marked the beginning of a new stage in Afghan studies, primarily owing to the general progress of science and culture in the Soviet Union, specifically in the former colonial backwoods of tsarist Russia. Further headway in the Soviet studies of Afghanistan was made when the two countries established friendly and good-neighbourly relations immediately after Afghanistan's independence was restored in 1919, which evoked great interest among Soviet people in the historical past and the present of Afghanistan, in the rich culture of its peoples, their languages, literature, ideology and economy. This unfading interest stimulated the work of Soviet Orientalists who produced not only academic research but also books for the general readership. As a result, over 6,000 publications on Afghanistan have been published in the Soviet Union over the past six decades. Among them are monographs, collections, reference-books, articles in journals and book reviews (in Russian and other languages of the USSR).

A great contribution to Afghan studies in the USSR was made by M. S. Andreyev, M. G. Aslanov, E. E. Bertels, N. A. Kislyakov, N. D. Miklouho-Maclay, I. M. Oransky, I. P. Petrushevsky, N. V. Pigulevskaya, I. M. Reisner, A. A. Semyonov, K. V. Trever, A. Y. Yakubovsky, B. N. Zakhoder and other Orientalists who have studied the ancient, medieval and modern history of Afghanistan and the evolution of Afghan society in recent times. They have also studied major aspects of the history and specifics of the transformations of the languages, culture and ideology of the peoples of Afghanistan in the past decades.

The knowledge of a nation's past enables one to better understand the present and grasp the significance of traditional views and institutions in present-day life, and the extent of their influence on the social, economic, political and cultural processes going on in the country. This, of course, pertains to present-day Afghanistan, whose people accomplished a national-democratic revolution in April 1978, the first genuine social revolution in its history.

After the April Revolution the good-neighbourly relations between the Soviet and Afghan peoples rose to new heights. Their close friendship and revolutionary solidarity serve as a sound basis for the steady promotion of these relations. The interest of the Soviet public in the past and present of their southern neighbour, in the political, social, economic and cultural processes taking place in Afghanistan, the revolutionary changes carried out there and in its home and foreign policies has increased still more.

A History of Afghanistan has been written by M. R. Arunova (Chapter Two, "Afghanistan in the Middle Ages"), Yu. V. Gankovsky ("The State of Durrani" in Chapter Three), V. G. Korgun (Chapter Four, "Afghanistan in Contemporary Times", except for the concluding part), V. M. Masson (Chapter One, "Ancient Afghanistan"), G. A. Muradov ("The Victory of the National-Democratic April Revolution and the Foundation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan" in Chapter Four, jointly with G. A. Polyakov), and V. A. Romodin (Chapter Three, "Afghanistan in Modern Times", excluding the first part).

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CHAPTER ONE

ANCIENT AFGHANISTAN

Historical Beginnings

Much of the early history and the events in the territory of the present-day Afghan state became more or less known only in the 1960s and 1970s, when a considerable part of the territory was surveyed by archaeologists. A good deal has been done by Soviet-Afghan expeditions which discovered numerous Stone and Bronze Age artifacts on the left bank of the Amu Darya.

That was a time of the primitive communal system, when man's life largely depended on natural conditions. In the Palaeolithic hunting and gathering edible plants and molluscs took up most of his time.

It is not as yet known if the territory of Afghanistan was one of the zones that were initially settled by man. The crude stone implements found in Dasht-i-Nawur, Ghazni province, give us reason to assert that at least 200 to 100 thousand years ago Palaeolithic hunters already lived in the territory of Afghanistan. The ancient camp discovered at Darrah-i-Kur, North-Eastern Afghanistan, where Mousterian flintwork (Middle Palaeolithic) was found in the lower layers, is believed to have existed 60 to 35 thousand years B.C. The bones of wild bulls and sheep discovered in the camp are witness of the fact that the meat of those animals made up man's chief food then. A skull fragment found at the same site evidently belonged to Neanderthal man. A grave of a Neanderthal boy was found by Soviet archaeologists in the Teshik-Tash cave on the right bank of the Amu Darya. Finds of Middle Palaeolithic tools in the sands by the Amu Darya in Northern Afghanistan indicate the presence of Palaeolithic hunters.[1]

The lower layers of the Kara-Kamar cave near the Haibek settlement, on the way from Pul-i-Humri to Tashkurgan, have been traced back to the Late Palaeolithic, the next period in the Stone Age.* At that time Stone Age hunters lived far and wide in the foothills of the Hindu Kush, though traces of their habitation are rare over 1,100 metres above sea-level. The anthropological type of modern man had taken shape already in the Upper Palaeolithic, but no skeleton fragments of that time have so far been found on Afghan territory.

The descendants of the hunters who had lived in the foothills and open valleys were the tribes that populated Afghanistan in the Middle Stone Age, or Mesolithic, from 10 to 7 thousand years B.C. Some time within this period a group of people who hunted sheep, antelopes and birds found shelter in the Kara-Kamar cave. Also, two caves and one "outdoor" camp on the Balkhab River, south of Mazar-i-Sharif, with the common name of Ak-kupruk, date from the same period. Found there, apart from bulky weapons and tools, made of stone plates and chips are microliths–small flint plates. These were inserted into the slits of handles and used as knives and other tools. The handles, made of bone or wood, have not survived for the most part. This new technique helped produce work implements that were highly advanced for that time. At the late stage of the Mesolithic flint insets with regular geometric outlines–triangles, rectangules and segments (Tash-Kupruk, camp 40)–became widespread. Late Mesolithic or Early Neolithic materials of that kind were found by the Soviet-Afghan expedition near Akchah where the people who had evidently inhabited this region used to hunt and fish in the deltas of small rivers and streams at the foothills. The Mesolithic flint artifacts of Afghanistan, though so far found only in the north of the country, resemble those of Central Asia of that time, primarily from Southern Turkmenia (Jebel and Dam-dam-Cheshme) and South-Western Tajikistan (Tutkaul, the lower layer). This most likely indicates the main directions of ancient cultural contacts.

In the Neolithic, or the New Stone Age, the economic development of communities in the territory of Afghanistan was gradually becoming dissimilar. In the north, hunting,

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* It had been supposed that the lower layers of Kara-Kamar dated from the Middle Palaeolithic (Mousterian). A detailed analysis of man-made stone artifacts found there did not confirm this. The artifacts bear a resemblance to those of the Late Palaeolithic in Iraq (the Baradost-type complex).

fishing and gathering still remained the chief method of obtaining food (the so-called food-gathering stage), whereas in the south one can see evidence of transition to new forms—farming and livestock raising, i.e., food production or a producing economy. The Bactrian plain, where the climate was humid and the rivers and streams running down from the Hindu Kush mountains came close to the sand ranges, was densely populated by Neolithic hunters and fishermen. Therefore dozens of scattered Neolithic camps were located in the spot where the sand and the rivers joined. Apart from the tools and weapons made of regular thin blades, there were artifacts of geometric outlines, including trapezia and segments. Potsherds, though not numerous, have also been found there. Neolithic layers were discovered also in several caves in Northern Afghanistan where, together with flint weapons and implements, rough graters and stone hoes were found.

For some time rich natural conditions made for a fairly stable existence of Neolithic communities. But, gradually, population growth and the increasing scarcity of animals forced man to look for new sources of food which he found, as is evidenced by the flint blades of the sickles used for reaping grain plants and the bones of domestic animals discovered in the caves of Northern Afghanistan, though there is still some doubt as to their stratigraphic site. In the south the signs of a new historical epoch, that of farming and livestock breeding, were more distinct. The conditions for the change were on the whole favourable. Soviet botanist N. I. Vavilov established that an exceptionally wide variety of grain crops were grown in Afghanistan: about sixty strains of soft wheat and up to fifty strains of dwarf wheat. Regions like Herat, Qandahar and South-Eastern Afghanistan, he pointed out, should be of great interest to those specialising in farming history.

It was in the south of the country that the first artifacts of ancient farming and livestock breeding were found. In the 1970s a French expedition excavated the Mehrgarh settlement dating from the 6th-5th millennia B.C. at the Bolan mountain pass near the Afghan border. Mud-brick houses and numerous fragments of stone vessels and sickles—these cultural changes are a clear indicator that a new age had set in. Only the flint sign including microliths of geometric outlines (trapezia and segments) bear witness to links with the cultures of Mesolithic and Neolithic hunters and gatherers. An interesting discovery was that almost identical types of trapezia, with a concave top line, have been found at Mehrgarh and at scattered hunters' camps along the Amu Darya. The pottery found in the Mehrgarh settlement was decorated with painted ornaments, a sure sign of the early farming period when considerable attention was attached to applied arts.[2] Everything considered, the relics of the Mehrgarh type were not unique.

In the territory of modern Afghanistan the most ancient relics of settled farming and livestock breeding have been found south of the Hindu Kush (dating from the 4th-3rd millennia B.C.) in the fertile and well-irrigated Qandahar province (Mundigak, Said-kala, Deh-Morasi-Ghundai). Fair climate favoured the growth of early farming culture. The evolution of that culture in Southern Afghanistan is well studied thanks to the Mundigak excavations conducted by French archaeologist Jean-Marie Casal.[3] A wide variety of earthenware, made on the potter's wheel and decorated with painted ornaments, was found even in the lowest layers. The use of such a sophisticated appliance as the potter's wheel is an indication of considerable technical progress and the development of specialised production.

As to the types of ornament, local culture has much in common with the early farming cultures of Beluchistan and Southern Iran. The late 4th and early 3rd millennia B.C. saw an expansion of ties with the farming and livestock raising communities of Southern Turkmenia, probably caused by a migration of tribal groups to the south-east. Thus, clay figurines of women, found in the Said-kala settlement, were made in the same manner as those found during Southern Turkmenian excavations. There is a striking resemblance in the painted ornaments on pottery. The Qandahar group of the early farming tribes had obviously made considerable headway in metallurgy, evidently due to the occurrence of copper ore in the territory of Afghanistan. Copper and bronze were used for making axes with holes for handles, daggers and ornaments. Casting in closed moulds was widespread.

The culture of this group of tribes was in its prime in the 3rd millennium B.C., when the Mundigak settlement must have played the role of the local capital. On a hill formed by the cultural layers of an earlier period there stood a monumental structure with closed semi-pillars at the façade, the supposed residency of a local prince. Another architectural monument is a big structure, supposedly a temple, enclosed by a wall, which is decorated with sharp pilasters. Bronze compartmental seals were widespread at that time. A wide variety of them can be found also among the implements of that period in Southern Turkmenia and Northern and Eastern Iran. ✓

A number of ceramic vessels resemble some of those of the ancient Indian Harappa civilisation in shape and ornamental design. Perhaps the Harappa centres in the Indus Valley received copper ore and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan; one of the largest deposits of lapis lazuli is in Badakhshan. This beautiful stone was highly valued in the ancient Orient for it was believed to have magic properties. Beginning with the second half of the 4th millennium B.C. lapis lazuli became widely popular in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and reached Troja in Asia Minor. Through multiple exchange Afghan lapis lazuli reached far into the West. There is evidence that direct trade and cultural contacts with the Harappa civilisation existed at that time. In 1975 French archaeologists revealed the Shoturgai settlement on the Amu Darya bank, and typical samples of Harappa pottery and seals were found in the lower layers. So far, only tentative excavations were conducted, but there is strong evidence that close ties existed between the ancient cultures. It is not ruled out that Shoturgai is the remains of a Harappa trading station. Various specialised production which, having separated from farming, gradually turned into crafts, and monumental architecture provide convincing evidence of an emerging civilisation. Discovered in Mundigak was an external wall flanked by square towers. At the late stages of its existence Mundigak was evidently turning from an agricultural community into an urban-type settlement.

In the 3rd millennium B.C., similar changes are to be found in the culture of another group of the early farming tribes of Southern Afghanistan—the Seistan group. There the Helmand delta, which consisted of numerous streams flowing into lakes constantly varying in size (*hamuns*), facilitated the growth of irrigated farming. In a few dozen early-farming settlements of that period high-quality painted ware, made on the potter's wheel, and also bronze compartmental seals have been found. The ruins of the capital of that group of tribes, known as Shahr-i-Sohte, are now situated in the territory of Iran. Excavations at Shahr-i-Sohte revealed a monumental building, metallic compartmental seals, a bronze figurine of a woman, apparently brought from Mesopotamia, and a clay tablet with signs of the Proto-Elamite writing. There are reasons to believe that, like Mundigak, Shahr-i-Sohte is the remains of an early urban-type settlement.

It is more difficult to form an opinion on the culture of Northern Afghanistan in the period when early-farming settlements flourished in the south. It is possible that in the north the transition to farming and livestock breeding was greatly delayed and that the communities with archaic Neolithic culture existed simultaneously with those of the settled farmers of the south. In some caves the researchers found traces of the "Neolithic with the cult of mountain goats" (3rd millennium B.C.), so called because ritual burials of these animals have been discovered in the cultural layer. The stone and flint weapons and implements found in the same layer were roughly made and obsolete for that time. Possibly sited here were the camps of hunters and livestock breeders whose cultural development was on a comparatively low level.

Considerable changes set in in the 2nd millennium B.C., when the culture of both groups of South Afghan farmers fell into decay for reasons not quite clear. Most of the settlements were neglected; the settled area in Mundigak shrank drastically, and hand-made ceramics prevailed, though artisans put out wheel-made pottery. In the north, by contrast, high-developed culture flourished. It has been studied by Soviet scientist V. I. Sarianidi during a Soviet-Afghan expedition there.[4] A number of valuable artifacts, some made of gold and silver, were found during chance predatory excavations.[5]

On the whole, the picture of that ancient culture has become fairly clear. A few dozen settlements of farmers and livestock breeders, five or six oases along small rivers, have been discovered in a comparatively small area between Daulatabad and Mazar-i-Sharif. The settlements themselves were concentrated in river deltas, in the zones bordering on barren expanses, where high spring floods could be used for irrigation. Obviously, small ducts were dug to irrigate the fields. The loess soil of Northern Afghanistan is known for its fertility. Research done by Soviet archaeologists has shown that oasis farming was already practised there in the Bronze Age. The field would be tilled by something like a plough driven by oxen. Each of the oases had its centre which differed from the ordinary settlements by a small rectangular fortress nearly 2.5 acres in area. The fortress was surrounded by an adobe wall with circular towers at the corners and semi-circular ones along the wall (Dashly-I, Ghirdai)—a stable and fairly developed fortification system for that time. It is known also that the cultural level of the oasis population in the 2nd millennium B.C. was high.*

Ceramics of standard shape was made on the potter's wheel and baked in special two-tier kilns near the settlements. The ceramists produced vessels of strict and refined outlines without ornamentation. Painted ceramics had disappeared with the decline of early-farming traditions in applied arts. But smelters, smiths and jewellers made all kinds of axes, sickles, mirrors, and pins with elaborate tops, often portraying a goat, a ram, or a bull. The number of weapons they made was significantly large and included swords, spears and combat axe. The latter, judging by clay figurines of warriors, were normally carried tucked behind the belt. The fortresses and a large amount of standard weapons indicate that those were years of armed clashes. The making of large open-work bronze seals, often picturing people and animals, was probably a separate production branch. There were also stone seals picturing, among many other things, winged lions, an image of a clearly Mesopotamian origin. Outstanding pieces of ancient art are the stone figurines of sitting women, their bodies made of dark ophite and the heads of light-coloured marble. The figurines bear obvious traces of the artistic canons of far-away Mesopotamia.

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* According to traditional chronology for the Bronze Age in the Middle East and radiocarbon data, monuments of the Dashly type are dated to the middle or the latter half of the 2nd millennium B.C. But if one takes into account the MASKA-correction for radiocarbon data, the dating should be lowered to between the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia B.C. In this case the resemblance between a number of artifacts found in Northern Afghanistan and those of Mesopotamia is easier to explain: they appear to date from the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia B.C. (Pierre Amiet, "Bactriane Proto-historique", *Syria*, t. 54, Fasc. 1-2, Paris, 1977, p. 121.)

This highly developed culture for the most part did not have local predecessors in Northern Afghanistan in the form of any kind of settlements of the early farmers. It had emerged on the Bactrian plain as something already complete, and evidently took the place of the archaic and largely Neolithic culture of the hunters and livestock breeders. At the same time all the chief elements of that culture are observed in the Bronze Age monuments of Southern Turkmenistan. Moreover, judging by the excavations in Altyn-Tepe, they had taken shape there in a natural way, on the basis of the local cultural traditions of the early-farming stage. In the 2nd millennium B.C. the main centres of that culture of Southern Turkmenistan —Altyn-Tepe and Namazga-Tepe—fell into decay. Part of the population migrated eastwards towards the delta of the Murghab River, creating new oases, each having as its centre a rectangular fortress with semi-circular towers along the walls. Evidently, the gradual migration of those population groups with a high urban-type culture resulted in the cultivation of fertile areas in Northern Afghanistan. Simultaneously, settlements with an identical culture appeared in Southern Uzbekistan, on the right bank of the Amu-Darya (Sappali, Jarkutan).

But, on the whole, that was a fairly complicated process. The presence of doubtlessly Mesopotamic features in Dashly-type settlements and of the grey ware, more typical of the regions south-east of the Caspian Sea than of Southern Turkmenia, point to the existence of other links. In any case, it was a period when contacts expanded between various countries and different cultures, which was often caused by the migration of groups of tribes. This perhaps explains why the ruins of scattered settlements with coarse hand-made pottery, typical of the cattle-breeding tribes living in the steppes of the northern areas of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, were found not far from the Bronze Age fortresses in Northern Afghanistan.

So far, no large monuments of the Bronze Age, which could be regarded as remains of urban-type settlements, have been found in Northern Afghanistan. Probably at the early stages of the opening up of new lands concentration of inhabitants proceeded at a slow pace; therefore the communities were small and scattered, not far from one another, each being a separate social organism. Notable are fairly large structures of monumental architecture detached from other buildings, obviously serving specific purposes common to a group of settlements (and perhaps the whole of Northern Afghanistan). Two such buildings were excavated in Dashly-3. One of them is square-shaped, each side being 130 to 150 metres long. In the centre there stands a round fortress with rectangular towers slightly protruding from the walls. Within the fortress there is a shrine-type structure with an altar at the wall, which means it was a cult centre, most probably a temple having various services, depositories, granaries, and dwellings for the priests and servants. The ancient temples of Mesopotamia are known to have been not only the symbols of the ideological unity of communities, by whose joint efforts they had been erected, but also administrative and economic centres, as it were.

The other structure is rectangular, 84 by 88 metres in area. It has a courtyard where various storehouses were sited and a small building with altar recesses. The outer walls of the building are decorated with numerous pilasters. It is supposed that the building was a kind of palace or temple but, judging by its lay-out, it lacks the dwelling space a palace is expected to have. Probably it was a temple, after all, but for a different deity. In Mesopotamia, for instance, there often were temples for the supreme god and his divine wife built close to one another. Whatever the case, it was a Bronze Age religious, administrative and economic centre. Although among the dozens of excavated burial mounds archaeologists have not yet found any containing riches that would allow them to be classed among the tombs of the secular or clerical elite, among the accidental finds in Northern Afghanistan there are quite a few valuable articles of the Bronze Age, including golden vessels with relief ornaments—a clear indication that they originated either from rich burial mounds or from temple treasure rooms. It is therefore safe to maintain that in the 2nd millennium B.C. an ancient Oriental type of civilisation was taking shape in Northern Afghanistan, though in conditions and a cultural environment that differed from what they were in the 3rd millennium B.C. in the south of the country. It appears that during this period a process of social and property differentiation was taking place and social inequality was beginning to set in.

The ethnic and linguistic affinity of the ancient tribes which had created these wonderful Bronze Age cultures is not quite clear. Already in the early-farming period the area was inhabited by long-headed people of the European type who by their anthropological characteristics are close to the present-day population of Afghanistan. However, a similar anthropological type existed in most of the other early-farming cultures in the areas from Southern Turkmenistan to the north-western regions of South Asia, and also among the people of the Harappa civilisation. Analysis of inscriptions on Harappa seals gives reason to suppose that their language can be classed among the proto-Dravidian ones which were rather widespread in ancient times. A seal bearing a similar inscription was found in Southern Turkmenia during excavations in Altyn-Tepe. It is possible that various groups of early-farming tribes in Southern Turkmenia, Northern Iran and a considerable part of Afghanistan also spoke the languages and dialects of the proto-Dravidian group. While in the south of Iran, numerous ancient settlements have been found bearing traces of the Elamite language which is, in some respects, close to proto-Dravidian.

In the 2nd millennium B.C. the situation began to change. There is reason to believe that part of the population in the territory of Afghanistan spoke the languages of the Indo-Iranian group, as most of the country's present-day population does. The ancient Iranian and ancient Indian languages originated from one common language from which they had adopted the fundamentals of grammar and the bulk of the vocabulary. The Indo-Iranian common elements (or Aryan, according to their self-identification) were not confined to the language alone: there was much in common also in religion, mythology and epic legends.

Analysis of the terms dating back to the Indo-Iranian community allows us to maintain that they were tribes that knew agriculture, but that cattle was their main wealth and it was the criterion of welfare. During this period a military elite had emerged: chariot warriors called *ratayshtars* (literally, standing in the chariot). Power was in the hands of the chiefs who were gradually turning into sovereign kinglings. The tribes that spoke ancient Indian languages were settling in Northern India, possibly in two flows, in the general direction from the north-west to the south-east. They mixed with the local Dravidian-speaking population, a fact witnessed by the strong Dravidian influence on the Aryan languages of Northern India. The *Rigveda*, the most ancient relic of these languages, is dated by many authors between the 12th and 10th centuries B.C., but they are supposed to have spread in the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. These developments, naturally, affected the territory of Afghanistan and many historians believe that the ancestors of the Indo-Aryans lived for a certain time in the territory of Central Asia and Afghanistan together with the ancestors of Iranian tribes.[6]

The appearance in the Middle East of Aryan proper names and specific terms associated with the Iranian linguistic group, is traced back to the mid-2nd millennium B.C.[7] In any case, early in the 1st millennium B.C. the areas of present-day Afghanistan and the greater part of Central Asia were already populated by Iranian-speaking tribes. The names they gave to some regions stuck for centuries. All this prompts the conclusion that during the latter half of the 2nd millennium B.C., and perhaps even earlier, Iranian-speaking tribes settled in Afghanistan and in nearby regions; they assimilated with the local population whose language had quite possibly already been Indianised. The initial regions inhabited by Indo-Iranian livestock breeding tribes were most likely the steppes between the Danube and the Urals. Everything considered, these tribes migrated in different directions: some reached the Middle East via the Caucasus, while others moved to the east of the Caspian Sea. These data are comparable, to some extent, with the evolution and spread of ancient cultures in accordance with archaeological evidence.

It appears that there existed three types of these cultures and archaeological complexes. The first one includes the cultures promoting the development of local traditions of settled farming. These traditions gave rise to the formation of ancient Oriental civilisations. Such are the complexes of the Namazga-5 and Namazga-6 type in a section of the foothills in Southern Turkmenistan and in the Murghab delta and also the artifacts found along the middle reaches of the Amu Darya, on both of its banks (of the Ghirdai, Dashly and Sappali type). While the local traditions continued in those cultures, in the 2nd millennium B.C. there appeared some features and phenomena related to the culture of Mesopotamia and a number of regions in Western Iran. This was reflected in certain artistic images (winged lions, or a hero fighting wild beasts), and in certain types of bronze artifacts, specifically battle axes and daggers.

The second type includes artifacts of the steppe bronze of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, mostly coarse hand-made pottery ornamented with simple scratched-on designs. They have been found also in Southern Turkmenia and in the south of Central Asia, and some articles of that kind have turned up on the left bank of the Amu Darya. The third type of the archaeological complexes of that period is marked by a specific syncretism of features, though in a somewhat rougher version, and of elements that go back to the zone of the Bronze Age steppe tribes. Monuments of this kind have been studied well in South-Western Tajikistan (the early Tulkhar burial mound, and the cemetery "Tiger Gorge") and can, evidently, be found on the left bank of the Amu Darya (the upper layers of the Shoturgai settlement).

This intricate picture reflects the process of the settlement of the tribes of new ethnos, genetically related to the steppe zone of Eurasia, which had absorbed in the process of migration certain cultural elements of West Asia. Simultaneously, linguistic assimilation of the local proto-Indo-Iranian population was under way. In the cultural area highly developed local traditions of settled farming prevailed. It is obviously not accidental that Indo-Iranian myths are reflected in the intricate patterns on the seals of that time. Whatever the case, this period was most important in the history of the ancient tribes and ethnic groups of Afghanistan, a time when the direct ancestors of the present-day population emerged.

Early Class Society

The ancient history of Afghanistan, beginning from the late Bronze Age, has been studied on the basis of archaeological evidence as well as written sources. The most important source on the ancient history of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries is the *Avesta*, a remarkable sample of ancient Iranian writings from which we have learnt the names of a number of historical-cultural areas in the territory of Afghanistan dating to the 1st millennium B.C. The Qandahar region, for instance (where an isolated group of early-farming tribes lived in the 4th-3rd millennia B.C.) is called Harahwati in the *Avesta*, which in Greek stands for Arachosia. The Seistan area, the homeland of the second group of early-farming tribes, is called Haitumanta (after the name of the Haitumant River, now Helmand). Since in ancient Iranian "haitu" means bridge, it may be supposed that there was an important river crossing. The area is better known under the name Drangiana (ancient Persian Zranka).

In Northern Afghanistan too there existed two major historical cultural areas. The territory of the present-day Herat oasis is named Haroiva in the *Avesta* (Areia in Greek), which eventually became Herat. The regions along the middle reaches of the Amu Darya, together with the southern regions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, formed Bactria (Bahdi in the *Avesta* and Bakhtrish in ancient Persian). Bordering on Bactria, and at certain periods becoming part of it, was Margiana (Mouru in the *Avesta* and Margush in ancient Persian), an area in the fertile low reaches of the Murghab in South-Eastern Turkmenia.

The version of the *Avesta*, which has come down to us, is by far incomplete. The most interesting part that has survived intact is "Yasna", which literally means "reverence, sacrifice". It contains various texts that were recited during specific religious ceremonies. Among them are 17 chapters whose author is said to be Zoroaster (Zarathustra), the famous founder of one of the world religions. Zoroaster's preachings known under the title "The Gathas", are very archaic as to language, but very emotional and passionate. The "Videvdat" (a law against devs), another important part of the *Avesta*, contains texts describing quite ancient tradition. And, last but not least, the *Avesta* also includes 22 hymns, so-called *yashts*, dedicated to different deities. Their language is still more archaic than that of Zoroaster's preachings.

The oldest parts of the *Avesta* contain enough data to describe the social set-up of the East-Iranian tribes, at least those that lived in the first third of the 1st millennium B.C. The primary social unit was the *nmana-(haus)*, a big patriarchal family, including slaves, dwellings and the entire household. The next unit was the *vis*, or clan, which was followed by the *zantu*, the tribe or the region inhabited by the tribe. And the fourth unit in the social hierarchy was the *dahyu*, the country or area that was headed by the दस्यु *dahyupati*, the ruler. Apparently the *dahyus* were the main economic and political organisms of that time, which presented oases with urban-type settlements in the centre. Such oases grouped round a large settlement with a citadel resting on a thick raw-brick platform, are known to have existed in ancient Margiana, in the delta of the Murghab in the 9th-7th centuries B.C. Most likely Nadi-Ali in Seistan was such a centre of ancient Drangiana. In the middle of Nadi-Ali is a hill, 31 metres high, and on the hill-top are the remains of a structure resembling a palace. It was built in the 7th or the 6th century B.C. Found during the Nadi-Ali excavations were, apart from pottery, fragments of copper and gold ornaments. Possibly this was the residency of a local *dahyupati*. The *yashts* make mention of the rulers' dwellings, evidently the oldest palace-type buildings. Monumental structures resting on high raw-brick platforms and dating from the first third of the 1st millennium B.C. (Tilla-Tepe) have been discovered in left-bank Bactria.

Available archaeological data indicate that certain changes had taken place in the culture of the North Afghanistan oases in the first 300-350 years of the 1st millennium B.C. The amount of artisan-made pottery decreased, and nearly half of all the clay ware consisted of coarse hand-moulded vessels, often decorated by a simple design. (Some of the cultural traditions, however, were preserved, notably in construction). The large number of bronze arrow-heads show that arms played a big role in the life of the ancient tribes. During this period iron began to be used, enabling the warriors and farmers to manufacture weapons and tools of unprecedented strength and durability. A similar culture had spread at the time also on the right bank of the Amu Darya (Kuchuk-Tepe), and in the lower reaches of the Murghab (complexes of the Jaz-Depe 1 type). The causes of the changes are not quite clear. Most probably they reflect the process of cultural assimilation which was linked with the adoption of languages and dialects of the East-Iranian linguistic group by the population of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Early in the 1st millennium B.C., as the settled oases began to develop, the nomad tribes, who also spoke East-Iranian languages and descended from the Bronze Age steppe livestock breeders, began to merge. When the nomads mastered horse riding, they began to cover long distances. Mounted warriors became a powerful military force in the ancient world. Most known among those tribes were the Sakas, dwelling mainly in Northern Kirghizia and Southern Kazakhstan. However, some groups of nomads often lived close to oasis settlers. There is reason to believe that nomad tribes rather early came as far as the south of Afghanistan.

Economic development, accumulation of riches, the growing threat of war, and the continuing division of society into rich and poor served to promote the striving to establish large political amalgamations with stable centralised leadership. The heroic epic tradition of the East-Iranian tribes, partially preserved in the *Avesta*, sheds light on some aspects of that process. One of the *yashts*, entitled "Mihr-Yasht" and devoted to Mihr, or Mithra, an ancient Iranian god, makes mention of a *dahyupati* of all *dahyus*, or the ruler of not merely one but of several oasis-countries.[8] The very appearance of the term points to the tendency for political centralisation, for unification of several oases under one ruler. Some of those amalgamations were fairly large. It is said in the "Mihr-Yasht" that riding a fast horse, Mithra was the first to reach mountain tops from where he viewed the rich "Aryan" land, comprising Sogd, Margiana, Areia, Khwarizm and the regions lying, evidently, in the mountains of Afghanistan. Historians have enough information to suggest that it was one of the quite ancient political amalgamations without fixed borders or stable power.[9]

The heroic epic tradition of the family of Vishtaspa, a patron of Zoroaster, describes the dramatic events accompanying such amalgamations. Kavi Khusraw, a remote ancestor of Vishtaspa, had fought against Frangrasyan, the leader of the nomad tribes called the Turas in the *Avesta*. Initially Frangrasyan conquered the country of Kavi Khusraw who apparently ruled Drangiana in South-Western Afghanistan. The nomad chief, however, lost a severe battle and was captured. Bound hand and foot, he was brought before Kavi Khusraw who then killed him "at Chaichasta, a deep lake with salt water" (most probably the Aral Sea). Soviet historian I. M. Dyakonov maintains that the Aryan land described in the "Mihr-Yasht" was a confederation formed by the ruler of Drangiana. In any event, it was one of the temporary amalgamations that were formed under the rule of lucky kinglets and were based on military strength. However, the power of the kinglets was limited by a "council of superiors". The religious elite, a priestly caste, played a major role, too.

Whatever the case, the struggle for unifying the separate oases in the conditions of constant clashes, when the country was often attacked by nomads, became the chief progressive trend at that period. It was in that historical context that Zoroaster emerged on the scene. Stylistical analysis of his preachings, the Gathas, shows they had been written by one and the same person and reflect the author's vivid personality, impetuous character, passion and intolerance. He was obviously a reformer rejecting the previous beliefs and denouncing the priests behind them.

Zoroaster was fervently opposed to mendacious gods and their advocates, and also to the rulers under whom the "bad preachers" functioned. In his religious views he gave priority to Ahura-Mazda (the wise deity). He also laid the foundations of the dualistic system dividing the world into the kingdom of good and truth (*Arta*) and the kingdom of evil and falsehood (*Drug*). Thus Zoroaster put it in so many words: "I want to say about the two spirits at the beginning of life, and of them the bright one told the evil one: 'There is no accord between our views, teachings, will, convictions, words, deeds, our faith or our souls.' The two primordial spirits appeared as twins, kind and evil in thoughts, words and deeds. And when the two met, they first established life, on the one hand, and destruction of life, on the other." Man, theoretically at least, is free to choose between good or evil. Zoroaster himself never doubted his choice and was a champion of *Arta.* But beyond Zoroaster's abstract notions and vague, though poetic, visions, one can discern quite real and earthly aspirations.[10]

The conditions in which this ideological phenomenon emerged and took shape, in particular the uncompromising dualism with eternal conflict between good and evil on a cosmic scale, are quite definite. Thus, Zoroaster mentions time and again, and in various combinations, livestock breeding and various domestic animals, most often oxen and cows. Speaking about livestock and animal breeding, the prophet showed great interest in their well-being and flourishing, in their being guarded against evil forces, against large-scale slaughter at offerings and, most important, against rapaciousness and plunder. It is known that at a certain stage of social development, when social groups became distinctly divided and transformed into classes, the number of cattle owned was what determined one's social standing. Cattle, as an easily alienable property, was the first to become the object of ownership, for cattle ownership meant prosperity. It is noteworthy in this respect that the noble family, one of the first to back up Zoroaster's teaching, was called *Hvagva*, originally meaning "having a good ox" or "good cattle". The name of one of the prophet's followers, Frashaoshtra, means "having good camels", and that of another was Jamaspa, "leading a horse". Even the prophet's name means "owner of yellow camel" or "cameleer".

But Zoroaster was not in the least a passive advocate of protecting welfare and wealth, of which prosperous livestock breeding was a symbol. He argued that society could be protected from misfortune and plunder and that principles of truth and light on earth could be established by means of *khshatra*, the strong power of earthly rulers. In his 17 discourses that have survived this idea is mentioned 63 times. A good ruler, Zoroaster said, brings death and destruction to the camps of enemies and thus enthrones peace to joyful settlements. In this respect Zoroastriism was a doctrine to a great deal in accord with the historical situation of the time, providing ideological grounds for setting up large state amalgamations under "righteous kings". This, in turn, was one of the causes of the rapid spread of the new doctrine which served as an ideological platform for the nobility which opposed their own power to society.

The founder of the doctrine himself was active in the political struggle for setting up stable state formations. Zoroastrian tradition maintains that Zoroaster appeared on the scene 258 years before Alexander the Great, but it is not clear whether it is the Seleucid era, which originated in 312 B.C., that is meant or some other period. The life and activities of the prophet can approximately be dated the 7th century B.C. The name of his mother was Dughdova ("milking cows") and his father's name was Purushaspa ("one who owns grey or spotted horses"). At the age of about thirty Zoroaster began to preach a new doctrine but was no success in his country. The opposition was especially vigorous on the part of traditional priests and Zoroaster was forced to flee his homeland. He found recognition, however, at the court of ruler Vishtaspa. The new doctrine was supported by many from among the nobility, including the ruler's chief adviser Jamaspa. With this strong support Zoroaster angrily exposed other rulers who heeded the voices of "false prophets". Zoroaster is believed to have achieved that success at the age of forty-two. But Vishtaspa's struggle for creating a large domain was hard indeed and he ultimately lost. His main adversary Arjataspa, chief of the Hiauna tribe, conquered Vishtaspa's kingdom. As for Zoroaster, he was killed at the age of seventy-seven by a nomad from the Tura tribe.

But this is only an instance of the military and political struggle for creating bigger state formations. Judging by what we know, most successful were the rulers of Bactria, where rich and prospering oases had taken shape by the 2nd millennium B.C. In the *Avesta* Bactria is described as "a wonderful land with banners raised high", which obviously implies valour.

According to stable tradition of ancient historiography, traced back to Ctesias of Cnidus, ancient Bactria was a strong political amalgamation. This tradition has it that Bactria was a large kingdom with a number of cities. Then it was attacked by Assyrian troops led by king Ninus and queen Semiramis. As the capital Bactra (now Bala-Hissar near Mazar-i-Sharif) was well fortified (apart from fortification walls there was a citadel), it was conquered only by a ruse. After the fall of the capital the attackers seized a large amount of gold and silver. Much of this story resembles a legend. Semiramis was the actual ruler of Assyria since 810 B.C. At the time of her rule her troops sometimes penetrated far into the East, though obviously no further than the central regions of Iran. Possibly in a record of events ancient authors proceeded from both recollections about these long expeditions to the East by Assyrian troops and from the tradition which held that there existed a fairly strong political amalgamation in pre-Achaemenian Bactria. One thing is certain, however: in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. urban-type settlements with strong citadels existed in Afghanistan and in the south of Central Asia. It is indicative that after the defeat of Media, the Achaeminian king Cyrus regarded Bactria a major rival, along with Babylon, Egypt and the Saka nomads. Some Graeco-Roman authors mistakenly named Zoroaster as king of Bactria during the Bactrian-Assyrian war: the ancient world knew Zoroaster as an outstanding personality who lived far away in the East. Perhaps Bactria and neighbouring areas were being drawn increasingly into the orbit of the political history of the ancient Orient.

Late in the 7th century B.C. Media, which had inflicted a crushing defeat on Assyria, became the leading power in Western Asia. At some point Media's influence must have extended also to the southern regions of Afghanistan. But Media's domination in the Orient was shortlived and its place was soon taken by the Persian Achaemenian empire. In 550 B.C., Cyrus, the founder of the new dynasty, captured the last Median king and seized Ecbatana, the capital of Media. The new state began to flourish and expanded enormously, having incorporated Areia, Bactria, Drangiana, Arachosia and Gandhara. These areas had most likely been conquered by Cyrus during his eastern campaign between 539 and 530 B.C. Some details of those events were recorded in ancient sources and it is known, for instance, that the Persians had entered into an alliance with the tribe of Ariaspa that lived in Drangiana. For their noble behaviour they were called Evergets (noble). According to another ancient source, Cyrus was assisted in his eastern campaigns by the Sakas of King Amorg, particularly in combats against the tribe of Derbiks supported by Indian detachments with combat elephants.

The stories about the Evergets and the Derbiks obviously describe one and the same event, when during the struggle against the tribes of Eastern Iran and Southern Afghanistan Cyrus managed to win over to his side a group of tribes. No details are known about how Cyrus conquered Bactria. But it is known that the first battles were not decisive and that only later the Bactrians voluntarily submitted themselves to the founder of the Achaemenian state. Any resistance was ruthlessly suppressed. Thus, Cyrus destroyed Kapisa (located in the vicinity of present-day Bahram). In the conquered countries he set up satrapies headed by Persian vicegerents who had armed forces and an administrative apparatus for collecting taxes. But not all of Cyrus' eastern campaigns were successful. In August 530 B.C. the Persian army was routed in a clash with nomads and Cyrus himself killed. According to some sources, in that battle Cyrus was opposed by the Massagets. Other sources name the Derbiks, and still others assert they were the Dais or Dachs. However we do know that they were nomads from Central Asia. The Persian army was most likely defeated between the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya.

After the death of Cyrus his son Cambyses succeeded him as "king of kings" of the Achaemenian empire (530-522 B.C.). He set out to conquer Egypt, which his father had failed to do. During the last year of Cambyses' rule the Achaemenian state was hit hard by a severe socio-political crisis. Behind the dynastic struggle going on at the time one can easily discern the internal contradictions tearing apart the empire Cyrus had built. The empire comprised many countries and peoples which had once been independent and would not reconcile themselves to their subordinate position. The Persian and Median tribes enjoyed a privileged position in the Achaemenian empire, with property and social differentiation growing more distinct; the nobility was getting richer while ordinary community members found themselves ever deeper in bondage. Similar processes of class differentiation were also going on in the eastern satrapies of the Achaemenians, where the local nobility in some cases took the side of the conquerors and turned against their own people.

Mass movements were triggered off by a dynastic coup. In a bid to secure for himself one-man rule, Cambyses secretly murdered his brother Bardiya. As Cambyses was away on an expedition to Egypt, one of the priests (a magus), Gaumata by name, taking advantage of the fact that the murder was secret, declared himself Cyrus' son and seized power in Persia. Cambyses hurried back home but died on the way from a wound received under unknown circumstances. Gaumata assumed the title of "king of kings" and the vast empire was now completely in his hands. But the disturbances that had started under Cambyses were mounting. To remain in power, pseudo-Bardiya suspended for three years both tax payment and supply of troops to the Persian army from the conquered countries. Soon after, a plot was hatched among the Persian aristocracy against Guamata and he was killed. Darius I (522-486 B.C.), of the younger Achaemenian line, became "king of kings". The new coup worsened the political situation still more and Darius I had to promptly suppress insurrections in many parts of his empire, including the eastern satrapies.

Opposition swelled most in Margiana where the insurgents chose Frada, a Margian, as leader. Dadarshish, a Bactrian satrap, was sent to quell the uprising and the Margians suffered a heavy defeat in a battle on December 10, 522 B.C. It was reported that 55,000 insurgents were killed and 6,500 were taken prisoner. V. V. Struve has contended that the Margian insurrection can be interpreted as a broad popular movement that was particularly dangerous to the social foundations of the Achaemenian empire. He argued that this accounted for the speed and severity of its suppression.[11]

Another uprising that was no less dangerous to Darius swept across Persida and some other regions. It was led by Vahyazdata, who announced himself to be Bardiya, a son of Cyrus. He was supported by the whole of Persida. According to an official version, the rebels were defeated in the very first battle at Kapishkanish fortress (supposedly identified with Kapisa) on December 29, 522 B.C. But the movement was not put down, and the insurgents mustered forces once again, which shows that they had support among the local population. They were utterly defeated in the second battle on February 21, 521 B.C., at Gandutava. There are all grounds to see these insurrections as a result of increased class differentiation which evoked protest on the part of the ever more deprived ordinary members of the community.[12]

Having won in the intensive struggle, Darius I conducted certain reforms and altered the state administrative system, instituting secret surveillance over the satraps. The roads were improved; and so was money circulation.

However, the tendency to isolate some of the satrapies, particularly those most developed economically and politically, remained. Indicative in this respect was the role of Bactria, whose satraps were usually appointed from among the ruling dynasty. The satraps tended to use their rule in order to make higher political claims. Thus, at the start of his rule Xerxes (486-465 B.C.) was opposed by his brother Aryamen, who headed a Bactrian satrapy. Later, still under Xerxes, another Bactrian satrap, Masista, who enjoyed broad support among Bactrians and Sakas, rose in rebellion. Under Artaxerxes I (465-423 B.C.) his brother Hystaspes, ruler of Bactria, claimed the throne, and that sparked off a protracted internecine war in which the Bactrians fought vigorously on the side of the claimant. During this period the Achaemenian state was on the decline, which was largely due to the unsuccessful Greek campaigns, incessant palace coups and the weakening of the Persian army in which the number of mercenaries was increasing.

Meanwhile the remote satrapies were growing more independent, some becoming individual states. In the East, for instance, Khwarizm broke away and a number of Indian lands, annexed under Darius I, became independent. Besus, the last Achaemenian satrap of Bactria, did not limit his domain to Bactria alone. Sogdians and Indians (evidently the inhabitants of Western Gandhara) were subordinate to him (at least they supplied troops for his army), while the Saka tribes were his "allies". This vast domain, which would later become the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, could not fail to influence the political ambitions of Besus, who tried to form an independent state when the Achaemenian empire was defeated by Alexander the Great.

The lists of the regions taxed by the Achaemenian state and records of events in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. mention the names of various tribes and peoples, thus becoming a valuable palaeo-ethnographic source. Among the multi-lingual population of the Achaemenian empire mention is also made of the Paktyes who lived somewhere in the eastern satrapies. Some historians believed that Paktye was a version of a name assumed by the Afghan tribes, now known as the Pashtuns or the Pakhtuns.[13] Records by Greek authors make it possible to approximately outline the territory where the Paktyes lived. Within this territory was the city of Caspatura, or Caspapura, from which a flotilla of Darius I set out down the Indus to explore the new territories of his domain.

There is also evidence that the lands of the Paktyes bordered on the territory populated by the "Scythians", that is, a group of nomad tribes ancient authors often called by the name of the nomads better known to them. More likely they were the Sakas from the Pamirs, where their burials have been discovered, or the Sakas who also lived in mountain valleys and on mountain plateaus but somewhat more southerly. Rivers in the area inhabited by the Paktyes were navigable and, possibly, their lands were in the mountains north of the Kabul River.[14] But there is no linguistic evidence of a merger between the Paktyes and the Pashtuns.

The toponymy of Bactria, Arachosia, Drangiana and other regions, now fully or partially incorporated in Afghanistan, has shown that the population living in those areas in the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. spoke mainly the dialects of the East-Iranian group of languages. One of the numerous indications of this is the element *aspa* (horse) in the names of tribes and peoples: Zariaspa, a nickname of the Bactra, and also Ariaspas, Aspasians, etc. It was these ancient East-Iranian tribes that made up the basis on which the Iranian-speaking peoples populating present-day Afghanistan were developing. There exist definite links between the Bactrian and modern Afghan languages. A considerable role in the development of the Afghan languages was also played by the Saka languages. The people who spoke them had moved far to the south at a rather early period and their ranks were replenished by inflows of nomad tribes. Obvi-

[illegible]

ouly the interaction between the settled population of Arachosia and Drangiana, who spoke East-Iranian dialects, and the nomads of the Saka group marked an important phase in the ethnic evolution of the ancestors of the Afghan people. However that was a long and complex process.

Though in the period between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. there were numerous uprisings and disturbances, for Bactria and neighbouring areas it was, on the whole, a time of certain stabilisation. The relative peace, Zoroaster had called for in his preachings, came to the "joyful settlements". There was definite progress in the economy, primarily in irrigated farming and in the handicrafts. The Achaemenian government built irrigation installations, though it laid additional taxes on the community members using the water. There also existed a *kyariz* system in which water-collecting galleries gradually brought subterranean waters up to the surface. Encouraging irrigated farming, the Achaemenians exempted from taxation, for a certain period, each person who built a *kyariz*. Quite probably, the first *kyarizes* in Afghanistan, known to be in a number of regions in the country, in particular in Farakh-Girishk, date back to the middle of the 1st millennium B.C.

The population was gradually concentrating in urban-type settlements, which were becoming major centres of economic and cultural development. The ruins of the Bactrian capital studied by archaeologists occupy an area of 120 hectares, not counting the suburbs. Many cities had a fortified citadel, apart from fortress walls. Thus, Altyn Dilyar-Tepe, a major centre of that oasis, was circular in shape with a rectangular citadel in the centre. Towns were the seat of handicrafts, exchange of goods, and trade. Indian sources have made it possible to draw up a long list of the trade items of the time: woollen blankets; various iron tools, including sickles, spades, ploughshares; pottery; gold and silver adornments; boats, carts and chariots—all mostly made by craftsmen. As for farming, there are many signs that it was little affected by commodity relations: from among the farming products various wines, including a wine variety from Kapisa, were for sale. There was a growth of international trade, which was patronised by the Achaemenian government, and there existed a trade route from Asia Minor to Bactria and further on to India.

The development of money circulation reflected the progress of commodity relations and showed that at the time the limits of the natural economy were overgrown. Sources mention taxes levied in various satrapies, with Bactria paying 360 talents annually (one talent equalling about 30 kilograms of silver). It was most probably a monetary equivalent of various natural deliveries, but it cannot be ruled out that taxes were paid in part with money. In the territory of Bactria, Gandhara and Arachosia coins of Achaemenian mintage—gold dariks (8.4 grams) and silver sikles (5.5 grams) are found comparatively rarely. More widespread were the coins issued by various Greek towns, above all, Athens. Local coins were also minted in Gandhara, in the shape of elongated or square silver bars with various imprints. A large treasure-trove of silver coins was found in Kabul, but only a small part of it was stored in a museum.[15] Apart from Achaemenian, Greek and Gandharan coins, it contained 29 peculiar coins resembling Greek ones in mintage and Gandharan ones by the impressions on some of the coins picturing a bird, coupled rams, the head of an elephant and a hyena (?). It is believed that the coins were minted in Kapisa or even in Bactria itself.[16]

It may be concluded, on the whole, that during the political rule of the Achaemenians, whose domains also included the lands of present-day Afghanistan, the development of class relations completed in that society. On the one hand, the local aristocracy, which represented the power of the central government in the provinces, strengthened their privileged position and, on the other, stratification of the community and enslavement of its rank-and-file members increased giving rise to large-scale popular movements in Margiana and Arachosia. The members of the Achaemenian dynasty and Achaemenian noblemen had in their personal possession vast lands and all kinds of workshops with slaves and the poorest members of the community, who lived as slaves, working there.[17] The slave-owning elite of the eastern satrapies sought to follow the way of life of the Achaemenian capitals. This explains why palace-type buildings of this period were discovered in Drangiana and Bactria.[18]

The middle of the 1st millennium B.C. saw the further flourishing of culture and the arts. Works of art not only of Mesopotamia but also of the Greek part of Asia Minor were already known in the region, which may be judged by the artifacts of the so-called Amu Darya treasure-trove chanced upon in the 19th century in Northern Bactria.[19] Quite a few articles had obviously been brought from other parts. Some were samples of the court art of Achaemenian Iran and even of Hellenic art. Others, in particular those picturing animals in swift movement, resemble the art of nomad tribes, the so-called Scytho-Siberian animalistic style. There were also pieces of local Bactrian art. It is thought that it was in Bactria that the local version of Achaemenian glyptics–golden rings with various representations resembling the gems of Asia Minor though differing from them in certain respects–had taken shape.[20].

Major economic and cultural achievements largely stimulated separatist tendencies in the eastern satrapies which sought political independence. The local elite was not inclined to endlessly share with the Achaemenian dynasty the profits gained by the exploitation of their tribesmen. Their aspirations were realised only later, when the Achaemenian empire, hit by an internal crisis, fell under the onslaught of the armies led by Alexander the Great.

The Flowering of Ancient Civilisations

The Graeco-Macedonian army dealt a finishing blow at the decrepit Achaemenian empire. The struggle between Greece and Achaemenian Iran, which had begun under Darius I, ended in a complete rout of the Persians. The last battle was fought on October 1, 331 B.C., at Gaugamela in Mesopotamia. The persons close to Darius III, the last of the Achaemenians, contrived a plot led by Besus, a satrap of Bactria, and killed their ruler. Besus immediately proclaimed himself "king of Asia". Apart from Bactria, his power extended to Areia and Drangiana. He tried to establish his influence in Parthia, too, but Alexander, who considered himself the natural heir to the Achaemenians, did not wish to inherit a diminished country and in 330 B.C. moved his armies to Areia. There he was initially received with honours by the local satrap Satibarzanes, but as soon as the main forces of Alexander marched further south, Satibarzanes fomented an uprising and destroyed the Graeco-Macedonian garrison left in the town of Artacoana, the capital of Areia. Alexander returned and dealt ruthlessly with the rebels, some of whom were killed and others made slaves.

In Drangiana Alexander's troops met with no significant resistance. Its satrap Barsaentes fled to a nearby region, but was betrayed and killed. While in Drangiana's capital, Alexander was faced with a conspiracy in his own retinue: not all shared his Oriental policy. Alexander executed several army commanders, including Philotes, one of his closest friends. Soon his troops advanced further to the east and quite easily conquered Arachosia, after which they headed north, towards Bactria. Besus could neither stop the enemy at the distant approaches nor prepare a strong and efficient army. Employing passive tactics he ravaged the regions lying on the way of the enemy. This, however, did not stop the great Macedonian. In a swift march his troops crossed the Hindu Kush and reached the Bactrian plain. Besus fled beyond the Amu Darya and burnt the ships he had used for crossing the river. But the fate of the ill-starred "king of Asia" was as sad as that of Darius III whom he had betrayed: his own men gave him up to Alexander. After a long absence, during which the Graeco-Macedonians had to fight the freedom-loving Sogdians in Central Asia, they returned to Bactria for a winter stay in 329-328 B.C. There they encountered a new wave of anti-Macedonian rebellion and in the process of quelling it several cities were destroyed. Pursuing a policy of winning over the local population, Alexander set to forming detachments of Bactrian and Sogdian horsemen. An impressive feature of that policy was his marrying Roxane, a daughter of Oxyartes, an eminent Bactrian, next winter. Though the ancient sources are unanimous in extolling the beauty of Roxane (her name in Bactrian means "radiant"), it was for the most part a political move. In 327 B.C. the army, reinforced with local contingents, moved from Bactria to the south, across the Hindu Kush, and reached the vicinity of Kabul, conquering the local tribes of the Aspasis, Gureys and Assacenians en route. In a battle for one of the cities Alexander was wounded and the city was totally destroyed and its population exterminated. Roxane's father, Oxyartes, was appointed ruler of the mountainous Paropamisus area. After his not very successful campaign to the Indus valley, Alexander returned to Babylon where he died in 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-three.

The Graeco-Macedonian conquest of the Achaemenian empire was of immense significance. To a great extent it was the victory of more developed forms of the slave-owning economy over backward ones. The political organisation of the Achaemenian empire no longer conformed to the interests of the ruling class of the countries it comprised, which aspired towards the continued development of the slave-owning economy, particularly of trade and large-scale commodity circulation, and correspondingly, towards an extensive town construction policy.[21] A new state was emerging on the ruins of the empire.

Alexander and the men close to him perceived the motley make-up of the new monarchy they were creating and attempted to smooth it over by drawing the Oriental nobility into running the country, and even encouraged mixed marriages. Many new towns and settlements were built during this period. A town named Alexandria was built in almost every satrapy.[22] Thus, in the territory of Afghanistan Alexandrias were built in Areia, Drangiana and Arachosia (evidently in the vicinity of Ghazni); there was also a Caucasian Alexandria at the foothills of the Hindu Kush (most likely in the vicinity of Charikara) and Alexandropol also in Arachosia (obviously in the vicinity of Qandahar). Simultaneously, there was a fresh growth of trade: the Macedonian phalanxes were followed by Greek and Phoenician merchants. Enslavement of the population of the cities that offered resistance could not but strengthen the slave-owning system. However, for the population of the eastern satrapies of the Achaemenians the conquests by Alexander the Great merely meant a change of foreign conquerors. Destruction of cities and the killing of their inhabitants kindled the struggle for political independence which, in fact, had got underway in the Achaemenian period.

After the death of Alexander the Great the forces rending to pieces the new world power, that was being formed, came into the open: uprisings flared up in the conquered countries, the Graeco-Macedonian garrisons insisted on coming back home, and the fellow-fighters of the great Macedonian were engaged in a severe internecine struggle.

After a swift succession of battles, conquests, collusions and assassinations, the outlines of large new states were beginning to take shape. One of them was ruled by Alexander's military commander Seleucus who, with a thousand warriors, captured Babylon in 312 B.C. and eventually created a state extending from the Mediterranean Sea to India. Bactria was annexed to the new state in 306 or 305 B.C., after which Seleucus moved south where he engaged in battles with Chandragupta, founder of the powerful Indian empire of the Mauryas. Seleucus was evidently not very successful in those battles and, having concluded "friendship and a conjugal union", he was content with 500 combat elephants, ceding in return a number of regions of the Graeco-Macedonian domain, in particular Arachosia. This is confirmed by the fact that an inscription of one of the heirs of Chandragupta, Ashoka (273-236 B.C.), was recently found in this region.

In the vast state of the Seleucids local traditions were being revived in various areas of political and cultural life. The new state attempted to win over the upper crust in the conquered lands by promoting the development of local culture. Cuneiform literature was flourishing in Babylon and local temples were being restored. The Seleucids pursued the very same policy in the East, where since 293 B.C. official co-ruler of Seleucus was his son Antiochus. He took up residence in Bactra. Antiochus launched several military campaigns. He also built new towns and reinforced the old ones, in particular Artacoana, the capital of Areia. During his rule silver coins were issued at Greek face-value featuring, on the reverse side, Athene in a chariot drawn by two or four elephants. The coins were made according to local weight standards, evidently with the purpose of winning over to the government's side the local elite connected with trade. When Seleucus died, his son Antiochus became the king of the empire (280-262 B.C.). The Seleucids were paying increasing attention to the West as they engaged in a protracted war against Ptolemaic Egypt for the Eastern Mediterranean. At one time Bactria supplied the central government with combat elephants, but soon even these feeble ties were disrupted.

About 250 B.C. the Bactrian satrap Diodotus broke away from the Seleucids and proclaimed himself king. The new state (it came to be known among historians as the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom) comprised, apart from Bactria proper, Areia and, evidently, Sogd and Margiana. Initially the Seleucid coins minted in Bactria portrayed a Bactrian vicegerent and not the head of the dynasty, and then the official portrait went together with an official inscription: "King Diodotus". Simultaneously, Parthia, too, broke away and became an independent state. Diodotus tried to extend his power to Parthia as well, but failed. The successor to Diodotus was his son, also called Diodotus. But the new dynasty did not last long. In c. 230 B.C. Diodotus II was dethroned and his lineage was exterminated by Euthydemus. Euthydemus' coins are particularly numerous among the finds on the sites of ancient settlements and in museum collections, which suggests that his rule was long and relatively stable. Under Euthydemus the state had to hold out against the onslaught of the Seleucids.

Antiochus III, the last outstanding king of that dynasty, made a desperate attempt to restore the former might of the state. His eastern campaign was a major effort to this end. In a battle with the Parthians he emerged victorious and made them recognise Seleucid sovereignty. In 208 B.C. he approached the borders of Bactria. The severe battle near Herat, close to the border, was followed by a two-year siege of Bactra. Protracted negotiations ensued with Antiochus III represented by Telei. A vivid account of the arguments put forth by Euthydemus during the negotiations, evidently in response to accusations of betraying the Seleucids, has been preserved. It was not he, Euthydemus continued, who rose against the king first. On the contrary, he acquired power over Bactria by annihilating the offspring of several other traitors. Euthydemus spoke thus at length and in the end he asked Telei to do him a favour and act as peace mediator and convince Antiochus to leave him his royal name and dignity; and if Antiochus would not do as he bid, their position would not be secure. On the border, he said, there stood hordes of nomads threatening both of them, and should the barbarians cross the border, the country would most likely be conquered by them.[23]

The siege of Bactra, which lingered on, did not leave Antiochus III any alternative, and he signed a peace treaty, after which the royal position of Euthydemus was recognised, and his son Demetrius married a Seleucid princess. The agreed amount of food and combat elephants were handed over to Antiochus III, after which he turned south, to India. Thus, the achievements of Antiochus III were not so great: both Parthia and Graeco-Bactria retained their independence and soon began to increase in strength.

Graeco-Bactria focussed all attention on the south where beyond the Hindu Kush mountains there lay the gradually weakening Mauryan empire. After Antiochus III was defeated at Magnesia by Roman legions, the treaties concluded by him in the East became still more unreliable. At that time Demetrius, the son of Euthydemus, set out on his campaign to India. He captured Arachosia, where he founded the towns of Demetria and Gandhara. Demetrius issued coins in two languages, with a Greek text on the front side and an Indian inscription (in the Kharoshthi script) on the reverse, which suggests that an Indic-language population existed among his subjects. Proud of his victories, Demetrius assumed the title of "invincible king". On the coins he was portrayed in a combat helmet shaped as an elephant's head.

But the extension of borders did not mean that Graeco-Bactria was politically stable. While Demetrius was away in India, Eucratides seized power in Bactria. He was evidently an energetic and ambitious military commander. His coins are fairly numerous; some bear Greek inscriptions and others are bilingual, indicating that his power had spread rather far to the south. Eucratides waged a fierce struggle against Demetrius and held out against the onslaught of the Parthians to whom he nevertheless was compelled to make territorial concessions. His activities, vigorous as they were, did not bring tranquillity to his country. Returning from a campaign, he was killed by his own son whom he had appointed co-ruler. Judging by the coins, the son was Heliocles. According to ancient authors, he rode a chariot over his father's blood and ordered that his dead body be left unburied. He then assumed the title of "fair king".

Political stability was inconceivable in such conditions. There are indeed coins of at least 20 rulers. Numismatists call them Graeco-Bactrian if they bear only Greek inscriptions, and Graeco-Indian if the inscriptions are in two languages. Many of the rulers, invariably calling themselves kings, were most probably lucky generals or political adventurers whose power was shortlived. And, correspondingly, their coins were few. Among such Graeco-Bactrian rulers were, probably, Antimachus I and Plato.

The coins of the Graeco-Indian rulers Antialcidas, Antimachus II, Apollodotus and Menander are more numerous. A great number of them were found in Arachosia which, evidently, was part of their domains. It is known, for instance, that Menander was born in a settlement not far from Caucasian Alexandria. He proved to be a far-sighted politician. Having united a considerably large territory under his rule, including the lower reaches of the Indus, Menander relied not only on the Graeco-Bactrian armed forces, but also on some sections of the local population. It was most likely for this motive that he adopted Buddhism. Still, the contradictions between the Graeco-Macedonian elite and the local population remained a source of internal weakness for Graeco-Bactria. The Graeco-Bactrian rulers also failed to build a stable state system that would ensure internal stability. The mounting pressure from the nomads, unable to be contained by the united and powerful armed forces, brought about the inevitable: between 140 and 130 B.C. Heliocles was deposed and Graeco-Bactria was conquered by nomads. They were initially stationed mostly on the right bank of the Amu Darya where numerous burial mounds have been excavated, though there is evidence that they are to be found in Southern Bactria too.

The Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, which existed only slightly more than 100 years, left a bright trace in the history of Bactria and a number of neighbouring countries. That was a period of the further flourishing of urban life and the spread of money circulation, which had begun under the Seleucids. Ancient sources mention a number of cities built under Graeco-Bactrian rulers and bearing their names. The population of the cities often consisted of colonists from Hellas as well as of Hellenised population of the East Mediterranean countries. There was a rapid process of cultural assimilation of the local population, its upper stratum at any rate, so effectively inaugurated by the marriage of Alexander and Roxane. Greek culture and the Greek language played an immense role. Ashoka in his inscription for the people of Arachosia used two languages: Aramaic, the language of the Achaemenian officialdom, and Greek, which had been introduced by Alexander and the Seleucids.

French archaeologists have unearthed the ruins of a city which had been populated by Graeco-Macedonian colonists on the bank of the Amu Darya, at the place where the Qonduz River runs into the Amu Darya.[24] The ruins of the city are now called Ai-khanum, but in ancient times the city was obviously called Alexandria-Oxiana (after the Oxus, the ancient name of the Amu Darya). With steep precipices on three sides, the city was a veritable fortress. Its Hellenic character is beyond doubt. The city had a centre for the physical and intellectual training of young people. Archaeologists have discovered inscriptions devoted to Hermes and Heracles. A man named Kineas, buried in a special tomb, was believed to be the founder of the city. The tomb (*temenos* of Kineas) was rebuilt times and again, and later some other people, possibly high-ranking officials, were buried near the sarcophagus of the city founder.

The main part of the city was the administrative centre. Found during excavations was a peristyle courtyard, 137 by 108 metres, and four porticos having 116 stone columns with capitals, in a style closely resembling the Corinthian order. Nearby stood a "southern ensemble" which most likely was the ruler's residency. In one of its main halls at least 15 statues, 1 to 1.5 metres tall, were mounted in the recesses along the walls. In another hall there stood a sculptural group with the statues two or three times larger than life size. The administrative centre also had an 18-column hall built in the traditions of Achaemenian palace architecture. The main street ended with a temple in which stood a huge statue of a male god, most likely Zeus. The Greek features of that culture are all too obvious: the Greek architectural decor, Greek inscriptions, including copies of Delphic aphorisms, typical Greek sculptures and household articles, a bronze figure of Heracles, and a relief with scenes from the *Iliad*. The thick raw-brick fortress walls, however, were built in the tradition of local monumental architecture. Though the vast peristyle courtyard of the administrative centre is of the Rhodes style, peristyle courtyards as such, though with a different architectural decor, were built in Achaemenian Bactria (Altyn-10).

Apart from marble sculptures, archaeologists also discovered in Ai-khanum plaster and clay figures, with parts of the figures often made of various materials. Some scholars believe that clay sculpture was not a Greek but a purely Oriental phenomenon. The fusion of the traditions of local Bactrian civilisation and Hellenic culture was typical of the Seleucid and Graeco-Bactrian periods. The coins of Graeco-Bactrian kings are remarkable samples of the medallion portraits of the time.

The decline of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Bactria and neighbouring countries. It was the time when numerous nomad tribes appeared in Bactria, Arachosia, Drangiana and Gandhara. Their leaders not only became owners of the agricultural oases but carried on the political traditions of Graeco-Bactrian and Graeco-Indian rulers. It is safe to say that interaction of the nomad tribes, specifically those of Saka descent, with the settled population of the oases played a significant role in the evolution of the peoples of Afghanistan. These complex issues doubtlessly deserve closer study.

Ancient sources suggest that the decline of Graeco-Bactria was closely linked with the invasion of Parthia by nomads, called loosely Scythians. Parthian king Phraates II tried to use the nomad tribes in military operations but, when he failed to keep his promises, they killed him in 128 B.C. His heir, Artabanus I, attempted to take over the initiative in the struggle against the nomad tribes by a retaliatory blow, but was defeated and in 124 B.C. killed in combat. It was Artabanus' son, Mithridates II (124-97 B.C.), who built up Parthian might and eliminated the danger the country was facing.

Ancient authors mention the Asii, Paisani, Tochari and Sacarauli as tribes that overthrew the Greek rule in Bactria. Presently attempts are underway to compare the tribal groups listed in various sources. But in general, it may be concluded that the large-scale migration of nomads had affected most different groups of tribes, basically those speaking East-Iranian languages. The dominating role was played by the Yüeh-chi—this tribal group occupied the territory of Bactria. The Sacas penetrated the regions lying further south: Drangiana, Arachosia and Gandhara. The greater part of Drangiana, which had been occupied by the nomads, was now called Sacastene, which was transformed into what is today known as Seistan.

Initially nomad incursions were accompanied by fire and destruction. Clear evidence of this is offered by the Ai-khanum excavations: the greater part of the administrative centre had been burnt down. The city dwellers used the stone slabs of the neglected ruins as construction material, disassembling the exquisite colonnade. On the ruins of the previously honoured tomb of the city founder ordinary houses were built. But that period obviously did not last long and was soon followed by a degree of stability. The rulers of the invading nomads soon understood that it was far better for them to get good profit out of rich cities rather than to burn and destroy them. So, in some of the conquered regions new city centres were built, the existing ones were developed, canals dug and agricultural oases created.[25] To maintain money circulation, coins were issued, minted in the manner of those used by the last Graeco-Bactrian kings. Most widespread in Northern Bactria were large bronze coins resembling the tetradrachmas of Heliocles. The gradually distorted portrait of Heliocles was replaced by that of a local ruler, most likely a Yüeh-chi, and on the reverse side the representation of Zeus was replaced by that of the true companion of the nomads—the horse.

The general situation that obtained in Bactria and in the neighbouring countries is well characterised by the graves of the Yüeh-chi nobility, discovered by a Soviet-Afghan archaeological expedition in Tilla-Tepe in Northern Afghanistan.[26] The graves were very simple: a wooden coffin on short legs was placed in a rectangular hole 1.5-2 metres deep and covered by a counterpane decorated with golden and silver plates. There were no burial mounds or complex architectural structures in the manner of the Kineas mausoleum. However, the deceased, placed in narrow coffins, were clad in extremely rich clothes embroidered with gold decorations in truly barbarian splendour. Stamped and cast golden buckles, plates and dagger scabbards were ingeniously and lavishly decorated with inlaid pearls, turquoise and lapis lazuli. In some cases there were three layers of clothes, each decorated in a different style. The burials are dated to around the 1st century B.C. and the first half of the 1st century A.D., i.e., the time of the Yüeh-chi rule in Bactria.

The discovered artifacts reflect several cultural traditions of that time. Thus, the scenes of the torment of animals locked in close fighting, animals full of tense expression, and winged dragons—all this can be traced to the art of Asian nomad tribes and resembles the Sarmatian style. Numerous multi-coloured inlays are also evidence of this. Another group of scenes represents the purely antique line: a warrior clad in armour, Macedonian style, women bestriding a lion, or Silenus with a rhyton in hand. Many of the representations are complex and have not yet been duly interpreted; possibly they show local, Bactrian images with a Hellenistic and Indian impact. Such, for instance, are the exquisite pendants featuring a king with two dragons on both sides. But in this splendour, that has joined various elements, one finds no stylistic discord, no eclecticism. It was the early stage of cultural integration which later produced the remarkable culture of the Kushan period. There began a new and perhaps most impressive period when the ancient civilisations of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries flourished.

The developments of that time in the south of Afghanistan and in contiguous regions have been less studied, but the general picture is the same: the nomads gradually began to accept local state traditions. Simultaneously, the region was undergoing an intensive process of cultural integration.

The historical situation varied from area to area: Graeco-Indian traditions were clearly followed in the South-East, in Drangiana and Gandhara; while in the South-West, particularly in Sacastene, Parthian influence was strong and ultimately extended to Drangiana and Gandhara, though to a somewhat lesser extent. The nomad tribes that entered those regions did not initially create any sound political formation, as they had done in Bactria. A series of Parthian coins with the ruler's head in a helmet embossed on them are most likely from that period. The embossment was done in such a way as to leave the head of the Parthian king on the obverse untouched. These coins are supposed to have been minted in Areia or Sacastene (formally a part of the Parthian empire, Sacastene enjoyed relative independence). It is significant in this context that Sigal, an urban centre of that region, was called the "royal city of the Sacas".

In the first half of the 1st century B.C. the Saca tribes appeared in Kashmir and Gandhara (together with the Yüeh-chi tribes that invaded Bactria). A leader of the Sacas (Shacas according to Indian tradition) soon founded an independent domain and issued a coin on his own behalf. On the coin he is called Maues (Moga in Indian inscriptions), both equally resembling the Sacan name Mavak. Initially Maues modestly called himself a king but later assumed the more pretentious title of "great king of kings". His coins were minted basically in the fashion of those issued by Graeco-Indian rulers. Later individual symbols appeared: first the representation of a horse on the reverse side, just as in the North Bactrian imitations of Heliocles' tetradrachmas, and then the ruler on horseback with spear in hand. That representation, typical for rulers of nomad lineage, was later used also by other Indo-Sacan kings. Judging by the great variety of Maues' coins, the founder of the Indo-Sacan state ruled for quite a long time. Based on this observation (and coins have been our only source so far), one can conclude that the state had flourished under Azes, Maues' heir, who ruled in the latter half of the 1st century B.C. A vast number of his coins—nearly 1,500 pieces—have been found in Taxila, the capital of Gandhara, and about 4,000 pieces have been discovered at the bottom of the sacred lake in Mir-Zahak, Drangiana. Portrayed on the obverse of these coins is the king himself astride a horse and in heavy armour, holding a spear or a combat axe. At the time the lands of the Indo-Sacas were enlarged somewhat at the expense of Arachosia and perhaps even Eastern Sacastene. Evidently during the life-time of Azes Azilises was appointed co-ruler. Azilises later became an independent king and, though he preserved the pretentious title "king of kings", the number of his coins is small. Perhaps the Indo-Sacan state was on the decline. Its last ruler was Azes II. The Greek inscription on his coins is roughly made and often distorted.

The westward expansion of the Indo-Sacan rulers compelled the Parthian rulers of Sacastene to respond to the challenge. As a result, the Indo-Sacan dynasty of Maues had to hand over Gandhara and Drangiana to members of another dynasty possibly related to the Parthian Arshakids. The first representative of the new dynasty was Gondophares, who issued two groups of coins. Some fully corresponded both as to weight and type to the Parthian traditions and were possibly meant for Drangiana. Others, which were Indo-Sacan in type and bore an Indian inscription on the reverse, were clearly minted for Gandhara and adjacent regions. Gondophares stayed in power fairly long. An inscription made on his behalf is dated the 26th year of his reign and the 103rd year of a certain era. The starting date for the era is supposed to be neither earlier than 80 B.C. nor later than 55 B.C.,[27] which means that the founder of what is called the Indo-Parthian dynasty ruled in the first half of the 1st century A.D.

Gondophares is known also to Christian tradition that contains a reference of him being visited in India by Apostle Thomas in 29 A.D. In 42 A.D. Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana made a trip to Taxila where he paid a visit to the Parthian king called Fraotes, which may be a distorted version of the name Gondophares. Like Maues and Azes, Gondophares called himself "the great king of kings", and the presence of this title on the coins minted in a Parthian manner makes one think that possibly he also claimed the Arshakid throne during the onset of a turbulent period in Parthia. His successors seem to have been less powerful, though they still maintained and even publicised their Parthian ties. One of the ancient sources says that the regions north of the lower reaches of the Indus were ruled by Parthian kings who constantly ousted one another. There are coins of a number of Indo-Parthian rulers who could well have taken part in that internecine war. Abdagases is a most typical example. His coins bear inscriptions in another, the third, written language—Parthian, or Pahlavi.*

Other rulers were Pacores and Orthagnes (a Greek version of the Iranian name Verethragna). One of the rulers even called himself by the dynastic name Arsan (Arshak) but the coins of that ruler, or rulers, are few. The quality of the silver coins had declined sharply. The country evidently underwent a period of political turmoil and economic difficulties. This, in great measure, led to its subordination to the new powerful Kushan state which had risen due to the fusion of nomad traditions and those of the settled population, this time in ancient Bactria. Although much has been written about it, a good deal in the history of the Kushan empire is still vague and confused, particularly when it comes to chronology.*

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* Since the first inscriptions in Pahlavi appeared in Parthia on the coins of Vologases I (51-77 A.D.), it is thought that Abdagases was his contemporary. The suggested dates of Gondophares' rule are confirmed by coins for the minting of which drachmas were used issued in 27-28 A.D. by the Parthian king Artabanus III (B.N. Mukherjee, "A Note on the Date of Gondophares", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, 1962.)

The early period in Kushan history was a time of internecine struggle between the small Yüeh-chi domains in Northern Bactria. In that struggle the Kushan domain gradually gained the upper hand. It is probable that it was in this period that the coins minted in the fashion of Heliocles' tetradrachmas with a horse depicted on the reverse were issued. At any rate, in the middle or the second half of the 1st century B.C. that domain issued coins with representations of the ruler on horseback on the reverse, just like on the later coins of Maues. Though the ruler Heraios, on behalf of whom the coins were issued, is called a Kushan, he did not yet have a royal title.

One of Heraios' successors took control over the other four Yüeh-chi domains and marched south with his troops where he obviously quite easily conquered the Indo-Parthian state. The name of the founder of the large new state is interpreted in Chinese sources as Kiojiukiu, and in the Greek version on coins as Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I. The rise of Kadphises took place gradually. Thus there are coins with a portrait of the Graeco-Indian king Hermaeus on the obverse, while the name of the Kushan ruler appears on the reverse with a rather modest inscription: "Kujula

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* A special congress on the Kushan period was held in 1968 in Dushanbe, USSR. Its materials have been published in full in: *Central Asia in the Kushan Period*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974; Vol. II, 1975 (in Russian). See also *Kushan Bactria* by B. Y. Stavinsky, Moscow, 1978 (in Russian). Indian inscriptions suggest the existence of the Kanishka era, according to which the dates of the rule of several Kushan kings were determined, but it is not clear when the era itself had begun (supposedly in 78 A.D.). Most scholars believe that the first year of the Kanishka era is somewhere at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., either in 110 or 128.

Kadphises, *yabgu* Kushan, staunch in faith" (*yabgu* is the title of Yüeh-chi princelings). Having expanded his domain, Kadphises adopted the traditional Indo-Sacan and Indo-Parthian title of "king of kings", though the number of coins bearing this title is relatively small. It is thought that Kadphises I issued the numerous coins of a so-called "nameless king", a typical Kushan coins showing a horseman on the reverse with an inscription indicating the grandiloquent title: "great king of kings, liberator". Evidently these coins date from the time when the powerful empire, comprising Bactria, Arachosia, Gandhara, Paropamisus and possibly some other territories, already existed under the aegis of Kadphises I. The king is known to have lived more than 80 years. The most probable period of his rule is from 40 to 90 A.D., considering that at least at the end of his rule he deposed the heirs of Gondophares in Gandhara. One of the heirs, Abdagases, ruled in the 50s-70s.

The new empire sought to expand. But in the west its rival Parthia somewhat regained strength with the coming to power of the younger Arshakids. In the 40s Parthian king Vardanes moved his camp to Bactria, which is indirect evidence of Kushan-Parthian conflicts. The Kushans turned their gaze to the south-east where political disunity in North-Western India was very alluring. These conquests were accomplished by Vima Kadphises, or Kadphises II, son of the empire's founder, which made the Kushans the richest and strongest state. It is not ruled out that under Kadphises II the Kushan borders in the south ran in the lower reaches of the Indus and at Benares. The Kushan state then included nearly the entire territory of present-day Afghanistan, at least the southern part of Central Asia and the whole of North-Western India. Like Parthia and the Roman empire, it was one of the largest states of the ancient world.

Kadphises II took measures to strengthen his state. One of these was the reform of money circulation undermined under the Indo-Parthian rulers who had released into the market defective silver coins. Under Kadphises II gold and copper coins constituted the bulk of the money in circulation. The picture of the Hindu god Siva, sometimes together with the bull Nandi, on the reverse of coins, testifies to his desire for binding closer to the empire the territories added to it. The magniloquent title of Kadphises II also includes Mahesvara, another name of Siva. By declaring his inclination for Hinduism, Kadphises II obviously hoped to strengthen the position of the Kushan empire in the Indian regions. Evidently under Kadphises II there was a clash with Chinese troops in Eastern Turkestan.[28] Though Chinese chronicles describe those events in a favourable light for China, Eastern Turkestan ultimately remained in the Kushan sphere of influence, and the Han westward aggression was checked.

Kanishka is among the best known of the Kushan rulers. In a number of inscriptions mention is made of the years from 2 to 23 of the era he established. If we assume that 128 was the first year of that era and the count of years started with his advent to power, then the years of his rule must have been from 128 to 151. In historical tradition Kanishka is known as an adherent of Buddhism. He is associated with the convention of a large Buddhist council. The construction of religious buildings and patronage of monasteries and Buddhist philosophers are also ascribed to him. Indeed, portrayed on the reverse of the coins issued by Kanishka is the Buddha, sitting or standing. His coins depicted many other deities as well, and in the inscriptions their names were spelled out. Among these are the gods of ancient myths Helios and Hephaestus, and the goddess Selene, and the ancient Iranian gods Mithra, Verethragna and, probably, Anahita, the cult of whom had merged with the cult of Nanaia of Western Asia, whose name is inscribed on Kushan coins. Since these cults were fairly widespread in various regions of the vast Kushan empire, Kanishka evidently addressed himself to all his subjects, thereby displaying broad religious tolerance. Meanwhile during Kanishka's reign Greek inscriptions on coins were replaced by Kushan ones written in a slightly modified Greek alphabet but in the Kushan, or, to be more precise, the Bactrian language, the official language of the new state.

Judging by the names of the Kushan rulers mentioned in Indian inscriptions, Kanishka's successor must have been Vasishka who ruled in the years 24 through 28 of the Kanishka era, or in 152-156, according to the chronology we have herewith accepted. However, no coins bearing Vasishka's name have been found so far. Possibly he was of the dynasty that ruled the southern part of the empire without the right to issue its own coins. Another outstanding Kushan ruler was Huvishka, whose name is found in inscriptions dated 28-60 (Kanishka era), i.e., 156-188 A.D. Huvishka's coins are nearly as numerous as those of Kanishka and they also bear pictures of various deities on the reverse.

The next ruler mentioned in the dated inscriptions is Vasudeva (64-98, or 192-226, according to the accepted chronology). True, inscriptions mentioning the years of rule may not have reached us. Judging by the coins with Siva and the sacred bull on the reverse, during Vasudeva's reign there was a revival, so to speak, of the ideological policy of Kadphises II. In the year 230 an embassy of the Kushan king (Bo Diuo in Chinese sources) visited China. Most scholars are inclined to identify that king as Vasudeva. That was, in fact, the end of the most magnificent period in the history of the Kushan state, which was followed by its gradual decline. Even the coins were of increasingly poorer quality, though the general type which had taken shape under Vasudeva was retained. It is thought that coins were also issued by two other rulers of the same name—Vasudeva II and Vasudeva III, but the inscriptions related to them are not known. All through the latter half of the 3rd and probably the first half of the 4th centuries A.D. bronze imitations of Vasudeva's coins—several succeeding series—were minted in Bactria.[29]

The decline of the Kushan state was undoubtedly also brought forth by failures in the conflicts with the major new state of the Sasanids. Though medieval tradition says that Bactria had already been conquered by Ardashir I (227-243), this is not confirmed by other sources. Falling under Sasanian influence at that time were most likely only Margiana and Sacastene, and even then they were initially ruled by members of the local dynasties. Everything considered, the first telling blow at the Kushans in that period was delivered by Shapur I (243-273). In his long inscription written in Ka'baḥ of Zardusht mention is made of Kushanshahr, the country of the Kushans, among the kingdoms and provinces whose rulers were subordinate to him, or paid tribute to him, apart from Sacastene and Herat (ancient Areia). The Sasanian vicegerent in the East at that time was Narses, the son of Shapur I, who bore the title "king of Sacastene, Turkestan and India up to the seashore". There is a good deal of literature on the interpretation of the inscription in Ka'bah of Zardusht.[30] Most scholars doubt that the greater part of the Kushan country was ruled by Shapur I. However, the Kushans did suffer a partial defeat, which could have been followed by both loss of territory and a formal recognition of political dependence in some form or other.

Most likely at that time the first series of so-called Kushano-Sasanian coins were minted by the Sasanian vicegerents in the East, who normally were members of the ruling dynasty. Issued in great variety, these coins have repeatedly attracted scholars' attention. Their interpretation is still the bone of contention among them, for different opinions exist in regard to Kushan chronology.[31]

The coins themselves can be subdivided into two groups. The first one includes the coins of the type adopted under Vasudeva, but the rulers (Kushan Shahs) who issued them had Sasanian names–Varahran and Hormizd. The other group was minted in the Sasanian fashion and bore Sasanian inscriptions, but the titles of the rulers were the same–"king of the Kushans" or "great king of the Kushans". Some of the coins in the second group have Kushan inscriptions. The rulers who issued the coins of the latter group are far more numerous. These were, apart from Varahran and Hormizd, Shapur, Ardashir and Peroz. Incidentally, judging by crowns and other signs, different persons often had the same names.

The historical significance of these coins is all too clear: the Sasanian vicegerents of the eastern regions of the state sought to maintain authority by using the cultural traditions of the territories they ruled or claimed. Hormizd, for instance, is named on some coins not just as a king but as the "great king of kings", a title that is the same as that of the head of the Sasanian state. Possibly it was Hormizd, the brother of Varahran II, who led an uprising in the 80s in the East to seize the Sasanian throne. We have observed the same situation in the epoch of the Achaemenians, when members of the ruling dynasty in Bactria considered themselves powerful enough to seek the imperial throne.

The Sasanids kept building up pressure in the East, and under Shapur II (309-379) there erupted a long Kushano-Sasanian war at the turn of the 70s, which is reported in many sources. The Kushans lost the war and the Sasanian troops seized Bactria.

The might of the Kushan state was on the wane. At the turn of the 5th century the Sasanians came under increasing pressure from Asian nomads, who repeated the march of the Sacas and the Yüeh-chis, and for some time ancient Kushan lands regained their independence, though there was a lack of former unity and might. Political divisions, which made it easier for foreign invaders to win, were largely accounted for by the social and economic situation—the rise of the agricultural aristocracy signalling the emergence of new, feudal relations.

In the Kushan period ancient civilisation reached its peak. It was a time of political stability and an upsurge of the economy based on irrigated farming and highly specialised crafts. Urban-type settlements are the best evidence of the level of progress. According to ancient tradition the Graeco-Bactrian state was already called the land of a thousand towns. This was never said about the Kushan empire, which in general was little known to Graeco-Roman authors. But there are quite a few data, archaeological finds above all, to suggest that it was the Kushan period in which urban life in Bactria, Arachosia, Gandhara and other regions flourished. In the summary of geographic data known to the antique world, compiled by Claudius Ptolemaeus in the 2nd century A.D. he named 18 cities in Bactria alone, though this enumeration is incomplete and to a considerable extent provisional. It was believed that by the 2nd century B.C. the population of Bactria was around one million, doubtlessly increasing over the next 200-300 years. Ancient Bactra was presumably for a certain time the capital of the entire Kushan empire and in any case the administrative, economic and cultural centre of one of the two component parts of that huge state formation. A new wall was erected around Bactra in the Kushan period, but even beyond that wall there stood a number of structures (in particular, a huge *stupa*, known now as Topi-Rustam). The main centre of Northern Bactria was Termez near which a number of Buddhist centres with first-rate art monuments have been discovered (Kara-Tepe, Fayaz-Tepe).

However, rectangular or square cities seem to have been built in the Kushan period for the most part. Their layout shows that the cities were built on instructions from the central authorities. Carefully planned and systematically built-up urban centres, they were strengthened with fortress walls that had towers at equal distance from one another, strictly in keeping with the Kushan fortification standard. Well studied among such urban centres in Northern Bactria are Kei-Kobad-shah, Dalverzin-Tepe and Zar-Tepe.

Quite a few such cities and towns with regular layouts are to be found in the territory of present-day Afghanistan. Among them, in particular, is Begram, located 60 kilometres north of Kabul at the foot of the majestic spurs of the Hindu Kush Mountains. They are in all likelihood the remains of the ancient city of Kapisa. A settlement that existed from the 1st century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. and was built in the initial period of the Kushan state, has been studied better than others. Some 25 hectares of its territory are enclosed by rectangular city walls. Excavations have revealed three consecutive periods, and help one to trace the evolution of the urban culture of Paropamisade.[32] A central road divided the city into two parts. The residential districts along the city arteries had small "flats" with three or more rooms, including a home sanctuary. In the city centre there stood the ruler's palace, in which archaeologists found a splendid art collection, obviously the remnants of a palace treasure-trove. The articles of ancient art are evidence of the broad trade and cultural relations of the Kushan state. There were tiny black-varnish cups from Han China, as well as glass vessels with various scenes painted on them, beautifully made bronze figurines of Hippocrates, Heracles, a horseman and a stoic philosopher portrayed in a grotesque manner, originating from the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. But of especial interest is the collection of ebony carvings; mostly plates inlaid in caskets and wooden furniture. Such plates were often decorated with pictures of women dancers executed in a refined style resembling that of the Mathura school of Northern India.

The Soviet-Afghan expedition led by I. T. Kruglikova made a thorough study of Dilberjin, another site of a Bactrian town 40 kilometres north-west of Mazar-i-Sharif. The first settlement had emerged there by the middle of the 1st millennium B.C., but it was mainly after the Yüeh-chi tribes conquered Bactria that it developed into a large centre.[33] The central part of Dilberjin is square, with fortress walls all around, occupying an area of some 15 hectares. Large residential districts stretch to the south and east of that fortified nucleus, which means that the entire area with urban structures runs up to 40 hectares. In a citadel in the city centre is a monumental temple, which initially had colourful frescoes depicting young men standing beside horses. Probably this is a reproduction of the divine twins known from Greek myths as Dioscuri. Iconographically the frescoes have patent Hellenistic features. Later, but perhaps not before Kadphises II came to power, there occurred a "change of gods": in the second period a large multicoloured mural on the temple wall depicted Siva and his wife Parvati, both sitting on a bull. The excavations also revealed parts of stone slabs with an inscription in the Kushan alphabet containing information on some kind of rebuilding. Yet it is not so far clear if it pertains to the main temple or some other structure. Found in another temple were three sitting figures. The temple was likely to have been dedicated to the ruling Kushan dynasty. Outside the city nucleus was a district of artisans who lived in small houses huddled together along the streets.

Yet another structure, the "big house", is vastly different. The numerous living and household quarters are grouped round a spacious internal courtyard. On the whole, the house was rectangular in shape and most likely belonged to members of the city patriciate. In the suburbs there were a Buddhist sanctuary and a water reservoir (*sardoba*). After the flourishing period under major Kushan monarchs Dilberjin began to degenerate in the 5th century and gradually became fully neglected. That was the lot of most of the Kushan towns discovered so far, including Begram.

In the Kushan period commerce was well developed and, like the building of new towns, it was evidently encouraged by the Kushan rulers. Top priority was given to trade with the Roman empire, mainly with its eastern provinces. The traditional land route of trade ran across Parthia towards Herat where it forked, with one road turning straight to the south, to Drangiana (Sacastene), and the other through mountain passes and ravines down to Kapisa-Begram. From Begram the road ran to Ortospana (approximately the present-day site of Kabul) and then straight to the flourishing cities of Gandhara. The distances between various points along the trade routes were thoroughly measured and the stopover lots for trade caravans and local places of interest were marked by special people.

In addition, a southern sea route from Egypt across the Red Sea, then along the Arabian Peninsula and further east to India, was becoming increasingly important in the 1st century A.D. Barbaricon was a major port in the lower reaches of the Indus, and Barygaza in the lower reaches of the Narbada. From Barygaza the land route led north, straight to Bactri. From Bactria Chinese goods reached India along the Great Silk Route, which linked the West and the East of the civilised world of the time and ran through Bactria. Trade with Rome was particularly extensive. According to ancient authors, various goods to the sum of not less than 55 million sesterces were brought to India from the Roman domains annually. The Kushan state doubtlessly accounted for a considerable portion of that sum, which is confirmed by the relatively large number of Roman-made articles found during excavations in Kushan territory. Far less is known about internal trade. However, the fact that thousands of small copper coins have been found during excavations of Kushan towns and rural settlements speaks for itself. Those were small value coins, which means that money operations were conducted also in small-scale, or perhaps in retail, trade.

The emergence of the powerful Kushan state was closely associated with the evolution of internal processes in Bactria, Arachosia, Gandhara and other regions. The lack of relevant data prevents scholars from getting a deeper insight into the social and economic relations of that period. They can be spoken of only in general terms. The considerable progress observed in handicrafts production, in urban life and in money circulation is an indication that the production relations of the slave-owning system continued to develop. Strong power, which strengthened the domestic and external position of the state, met the interests of the top slave-owning stratum of society and the big merchants of Bactria and Gandhara. Interesting facts about agrarian relations have been disclosed in Soviet archaeological studies dealing with North Bactrian rural settlements of the Kushan period. These settlements are of two types: small ones with slipshod layouts and multi-room houses with living and household structures. Judging by the size of the houses, large families dwelt in them. The more substantial house probably belonged to the village headman. There were no fortification walls. Evidently these are the dwellings of the village communities, in which the interests of central power were represented by the local elder.

However, settlements of another type prevail. They are square-shaped or rectangular, surrounded by a wall, sometimes having towers, and resemble towns in layout; only they are a good deal smaller, normally not more than 0.5-1 hectare. In excavated settlements of this type archaeologists have found huge depositories for wine and grain reminiscent of the state storehouses of the Oriental despotat, for instance, Urartu. Possibly these settlements were temple or royal economic complexes with bonded labourers, who were like slaves. These settlements could also have been economic units that were often created in Oriental states from among prisoners of war and other persons who did not enjoy full rights.

The excavations of Bactrian urban centres revealed a considerable social differentiation of the population, which influenced the division of town territory according to estate and rank. Apart from the huge buildings of the city nobility discovered in Dalverzin and Dilberjin, most of the houses were blocks of 6 to 12 rooms with a common household yard, which belonged to house communities of a kind. As can be deduced from documents of the 3rd century A.D., Khwarizm archives found in the Toprak-Kala palace, nearly half, and sometimes more than half, of the population in such communities were slaves. Yet during this period notable changes were already fermenting within society. According to Indian sources, the first centuries A.D. saw the emergence of the institution of land grants. Archaeological evidence also testifies to the enhanced political role of the agricultural aristocracy. In the 5th and 6th centuries, when the urban centres were on the decline, individual estates and castles came to the fore. The castles with many-metre platforms at the base were increasingly becoming impregnable fortresses, symbolising the independence of their owners. These were most likely the symptoms of the oncoming of the new feudal age. The degeneration of towns was accompanied by a decline of artisan industries, with earthen pottery becoming more coarse and often being hand-made. Nomad invasions by themselves can hardly explain these developments. Indeed, the penetration of nomads in the 2nd century B.C. did not stop the development of the local structures which had not used up to the full all the opportunities of the existing mode of production. During this period the situation underwent rapid change, and there is reason to associate this with the crisis of a definite form of social relations, namely, the crisis of the slave-owning system.[34]

The most significant achievement of Kushan civilisation is most likely the high level of cultural development. Kushan culture, for all the local and temporary differences, was a fusion of the achievements of local ancient Oriental civilisation, of the invigorating aspects of Hellenism, of the refined manner of Indian art and the tempestuous style brought in by the nomads from the vast Asian steppes. The early stage of this synthetic, though stylistically united, art is well represented in Tilla-Tepe. The Kushan towns with their well-established cultural standards ranging from pottery to articles of religious cult were definitely the bearers and base of the new type of culture. That urbanised, as it were, culture also affected, as did monetary relations, the rural areas. The unity of the mass, traditional culture, brought to light during the Kushan excavations, is striking.

Buddhism became widespread in the Kushan period, as has been already mentioned, and its monuments are to be found all over the territory of that vast state. As a rule, they are lavishly decorated with sculptures, reliefs and paintings, which make them genuine treasures of art. Most widely known are the ancient Buddhist monuments in the vicinity of Hadda, not far from Jalalabad. The ruins of Buddhist *stupas*, monasteries and some other structures have been subjected to close study. The figures of the Buddha and the *Bodhisattvas* are an ideal and perfect image of inner contemplation. But in other sculptures, in which the image was not restricted by preconceived canons, the realism of Hadda sculpturers was particularly impressive. Such are the figures of the donators who made material contribution to the development and maintenance of the Buddhist cult. They show men in light tunics with thick moustaches on strong-willed faces. Great inner strength distinguishes the "head of an ascetic", an emaciated old man with sharp lines at the mouth, his brows knitted with determination. Hadda sculpture, with its realism and emphasis on the individual features of the personages presented, its psychological penetration, is an outstanding achievement of Kushan art, which had creatively assimilated the methods of expressive psychological portrayal of Hellenic sculpturers.

The Kushan rulers upheld Buddhism and, at the same time, sought to build up the prestige of secular authority, which is seen from their efforts to establish the dynasty cult. The Surkh-Kotal sanctuaries in Northern Afghanistan, 15 kilometres to the south of Pul-i-Humri, are remarkable dynasty cult monuments. Excavations have shown that there, on a high hill surrounded by a wall with towers, stood a number of structures, including the main temple with a fire-altar in the centre. Archaeologists found stone statues of Kushan rulers there. Leading to the temple was a long flight of steps which began at the foot of the hill. Of great interest is a many-line inscription made in Greek letters but in the Kushan language, or Bactrian, for that matter, as was the case with the Dilberjin inscription. The inscription is about repair works and mentions the nobles who supervised the reconstruction, and names the complex itself–the "Temple of Kanishka, the Victor". It is not ruled out that the prodigious structure was erected during Kanishka's rule.

Apart from official cults and religions, there existed the beliefs of the popular masses, most interesting relics of which are the numerous terracotta figurines that have been found in towns and rural settlements (Buddhist ones account for but a few). Preference is given to figurines of female deities, clad in robes hanging in heavy folds, with a cult vessel or a fruit in hand. Most likely it is a female deity, that is a goddess of fertility and guardian of the household. This explains why such figurines were found in almost every house. Another distinctive feature of the mass, folk culture is the considerable number of figurines of horsemen, or just of saddled horses, as a kind of memory of the founders of the Kushan state and one of the fundamental elements of its armed forces. Kushan culture, closely associated with the socio-economic basis and the political situation in the state, is clear evidence of the flourishing of the ancient civilisations that existed in the territory of Afghanistan, a process brought forth to a great extent by the cross-fertilisation of various cultural traditions, broad cultural ties and intercourse, which have always been the main stimulants of historical progress.

CHAPTER TWO

AFGHANISTAN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

After the collapse of the Kushan empire a large part of Afghanistan was incorporated in the state of the Chionites or Ephthalites, which rose on its ruins. Some scholars believe the Ephthalite state had been growing round the central regions of what is today Badakhshan. In the second half of the 5th century the Ephthalites seized Gandhara and extended their rule as far as Punjab, Sind and Rajasthan. The local rajas who agreed to pay tribute to the Ephthalite rulers usually remained in their domains. Towards the mid-6th century the Ephthalite state was falling into decay. In the year 533 their supreme ruler Mihiragula was defeated by a coalition of rajas who ruled North-Western India, and in 567 the joint forces of Iran (ruled by the Sassanian dynasty at the time) and the West-Turkic kaganate dealt a crushing blow to the Ephthalites and divided their territory. The greater part of what is today Afghanistan went to Khusraw I Anushirwan (with the exception of the north-eastern regions controlled by the Turks). The state that had emerged in the valley of the Kabul River and in the area between the Indus and the Chenab, which was ruled by the Shahi dynasty, claimed kindred to the Kushans.

The emergence of the Ephthalite state was accompanied by migrations of a number of tribes under its rule from the southern regions of Central Asia to areas north of the Hindu Kush and, further, to the Indus valley. These migrations changed, to a certain extent, the ethnic make-up of the territories that are part of present-day Afghanistan and had a strong impact on the ethnic evolution of its peoples.

The 4th-6th centuries A.D. of Afghanistan's history saw both violent political overthrows and major changes in social and economic development: the slave-owning system was giving way to nascent feudalism.

The disintegration of the Kushan state and Ephthalite conquests brought about the emergence of a large number of small, conflicting principalities in the territory of Afghanistan and contiguous regions of the Indus valley. The rulers and nobility of these principalities were gradually becoming big feudal-type landowners.

As feudal society was taking shape, new social classes were emerging, those of feudal landowners and the underprivileged socially downtrodden peasants. Only in individual remote regions did the relations of the previous social systems persist.

Major changes set in in ideology and culture: replacing Buddhism in the religious form of Hinduism was the ideology of feudal society.

These most important social, economic, ideological and cultural changes, signalling the coming of a new, feudal system, coincided with the fall of the Sasanian state and the appearance of new conquerors at the Afghan borders—the Arabs.

The Arab Conquest

The Arab Caliphate, formed in the early half of the 7th century, played an immense role in the fates of neighbouring countries. Its emergence was closely linked with complex social, ideological and political processes of the feudalisation of Arab society in Western and Northern Arabia, ideologically expressed in Islam.*

The founder of the new religion was prophet Muhammad (570-632), an Arab of the Koreishite tribe born in Mecca.

During the last decade of his life Muhammad had the greater part of Arabia under his power and influence. His first four successors, the caliphs Abu Bakr (632-634), Omar (634-644), Osman (644-656), and Ali (656-661), are called pious in Muslim tradition. In the years of their rule, which was the period of early Islam, theocracy was a recognised ideal in the caliphate, just as it was under Muhammad: religious and secular power, law and religion constituted a single whole and the head of the religious community was simultaneously the head of state.[1]

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* Islam—literally "submission" to the will of God, is a monotheist religion which originated in the first quarter of the 7th century in Western Arabia. Many important elements of Islam had been borrowed from Judaism and Christianity. The tenets of Islam are laid down in the Koran, the sacred book of Muslims, and also in the Sunna, a collection of legends describing the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim creed is: "There is no god but God (Allah): Muhammad is the Prophet of God." The religious practices obligatory on the believer are: the performance of divine worship five times a day for Sunnites and three for Shiites; keeping the fast in the month of Ramadan; payment of the *zaqat*—one-fortieth of one's profit for the benefit of the poor; and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Urging the spread of Islam, the caliphs built an enormous state. After a number of victorious campaigns they controlled a considerable part of the Byzantine empire, conquered the Sasanian state and a number of other states in South-West Asia, North Africa and on the Iberian Peninsula. By the middle of the 8th century the caliphate comprised the territories of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, countries of the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco), and Spain, part of Transcaucasia (up to the Main Caucasian Range), part of Central Asia (including Samarkand, Khwarizm and Ferghana), a considerable part of Afghanistan and some regions of North-Western India (Sind and the valley of the Indus, up to Multan). They also controlled Sicily and Malta.

The Arab expeditions to Afghanistan—Ghazni, Herat, Seistan and Tokharistan—began in the middle of the 7th century. In 652 the Arabs captured Herat. In many regions, in particular Bamian, Bust, Balkh, Badghis, Ghazni, Kabul, Parvan, and Gorband, the local rulers and the population offered fierce resistance and the caliphs and their vicegerents often had to dispatch troops once again to subdue the recalcitrants. The sources say some mountain regions—Ghur in the upper reaches of the Harirud and the area of the Suleiman Mountains—were never fully conquered by the Arabs. Balkh was captured only in 707 and Parvan, Gorband and Panjshir still later, in the 790s. The Kabul area, ruled by the local dynasty, sent tribute to the caliphs from time to time and was fully subjugated by the Arabs only in the early 9th century after numerous expeditions. Qandahar was conquered at the same time.

The militarily and politically turbulent 7th and 8th centuries were a rather complex period in the history of the peoples inhabiting Afghanistan. Regrettably, sources of relevant data are insufficient for studying many important aspects of the political and socio-economic processes of the evolution of statehood during the Arab conquest and learning about the relations between various peoples and tribes and the development of new social and economic institutions, the growth of cities, expansion of trade, and the transformation of old and emergence of new cultural traditions.

But even available data give us reason to believe that in the eastern outskirts of the Arab caliphate, which, at the time, also included the territory of Afghanistan, feudal relations were beginning to take shape in the 7th and 8th centuries. The process, however, was uneven in different physico-geographic zones. In the oases on the plains it proceeded a good deal faster than in the outlying areas and in the mountain districts where nomad and semi-nomad cattle-breeding tribes lived and communal tribal relations prevailed. Though slavery as a system continued to exist (there were slave markets, for instance, in Balkh, Kabul and some other cities), it did not play a significant role in social and economic activity. Slaves were used mainly in the household and also in mining, handicrafts and livestock breeding. Under the Arabs the land was drastically redistributed, particularly where farming had been well developed. The greater part of the land was declared state property and was cultivated by peasants who enjoyed the right of hereditary lease; here the tax and the feudal rent coincided. Taxes from that land went as payment to the troops and clerks. A considerable portion of the lands was appropriated by the caliphs and members of their families, and by the Arab nobility.

At the turn of the 9th century there was a growth in private land holdings, or *mulqs* (hereditary land grants to Arab military commanders, district rulers and the local aristocracy) and conventional holdings, or *iqta*.

At first the conventional holdings were only a part of the rent-cum-tax granted as payment for service rendered during the term of service or for life; later the right to rent was combined with the right to land tenure. In that period *waqf* ownership began to be practised. *Waqfs* (land grants) were received by mosques, madrasahs and other Muslim establishments and could be neither sold nor alienated and were exempt from taxation. There also existed communal lands, but their size diminished after forceful appropriation by Arab conquerors. The peasants were compelled to cultivate state-owned and private lands and also the lands of *iqta* owners on metayage rent terms, thus falling into feudal dependence. The land was given to peasants on the condition that they would pay one-fourth, one-sixth or one-eighth of the crops, depending on who owned the beasts of draught, farm implements and seeds—the sharecropper or the landowner.

A corollary of the incorporation of Afghanistan in the caliphate was the migration of Arabs who settled on the conquered lands. Some of those lands became the possession of Arab military commanders and officials. However, there were less Arab settlements in Afghanistan than, for instance, in Iraq or Iran. But it is known that Arab warriors, resettled with their families to Tokharistan, Eastern Khorasan and other localities, were given land and housing. In some regions the Arabs did not mix with the local population and lived isolated. Arab villages existed in many regions of Afghanistan also in the 20th century (in particular, in the north of the country, near Kabul and Jalalabad).

The main consequence of the Arab conquest was the gradual spread of Islam and Arabic (as the official and literary language), and also the introduction of the Arabic script in the writing of the local languages. In the territory of present-day Afghanistan Islam was spread primarily in Balkh (a mosque was built there in 742), Herat and Seistan. As for Kabul, Ghur and a number of mountain localities, their population began to profess Islam much later, in the 9th-11th centuries, for the Arabs could not subjugate those regions for a long time. In Nuristan (Kafiristan) Islam took hold only at the turn of the 20th century.

On the vast territories they had conquered, the Arab caliphs often left local rulers, making it binding on them to secure the conveyance to the treasury of taxes, tribute or gifts; and Arab vicegerents were appointed to govern large regions like Khorasan, Seistan and Tokharistan. However, subordinate to the Khorasan vicegerent, for instance, were the rulers of Kabul and Qandahar. A single taxation system was established for the whole of the caliphate, though in some areas local leaders and tribal chiefs still levied tribute for themselves, as had been the practice before the Arab conquest.

Muslims paid the *zaqat* (literally "cleansing", alms for the poor) amounting to 2.5 per cent of the crop. The cultivators also paid the *kharaj*, or one-tenth of the crop. Non-Muslims had to pay a bigger land tax and a special per capita tax—the *jizia*. In addition, the population also paid various duties in kind (for the maintenance of messengers, officials and others); their unpaid bonded labour was used for the construction of roads, irrigation canals and palaces.

Taxation usually involved various abuses and cruel treatment on the part of tax collectors and the landowners. Taxes were constantly rising. Fearing eruption of broad popular protest, the authorities were at times compelled to make concessions. Thus, newly-converted Muslims were freed from paying the *kharaj* twice during a fixed period of time.

Dissatisfaction with the taxation policy was expressed more and more often not only by the tax-paying population, but also by other social groups—the local non-Arab nobility who were often forced not only to obey the vicegerents of the caliph but to hand over to them a considerable portion of their income; traders who had accepted Islam cherishing the hope that they would be granted equal rights with the Arabs; adherents of theocracy who were opposed to the caliphate being turned into a secular state, and others.

As is known from sources, during this period popular opposition took various forms—from passive resistance (leaving the place of residence and evading taxation) to armed actions which in most cases merged with the rebellions by individuals or groups of people defending the interests of various social strata. Many of those protest actions were conducted under the banner of various sectarian doctrines, as those propounded by Shiites, Kharijites, and Hurramites.* Thus, the supporters of the Kharijite sect, which had taken its final shape towards the end of the 7th century, led several rebellions in the 8th century (and later, in the 9th and 10th centuries), in Khorasan and Seistan, among other regions. At the turn of the 740s the supporters of the Hurramite sect, which was close to the Mazdakites, preached in Khorasan the ideas of social equality among all people, defending their right to land and property, and called for massive armed struggle.[2] In the second half of the 8th century, they led the Muqanna uprising in Mawarannahr, which exerted strong influence on various areas of Northern Afghanistan.

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* More on Shiites, Kharijites and Hurramites see further in this chapter.—*Author.*

Most of these movements in the early half of the 8th century were directed against the caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750). The struggle was headed by descendants of Abbas (uncles of prophet Muhammad), known as Abbasids. Among other things, they promised the Muslims (including the new converts) and non-Muslims to ease the burdensome taxation. This explains why the pro-Abbasid uprising stirred up by Abu Muslim at Merv (747) was joined by the population of Tokharistan, Herat, Talikan, Balkh and other regions, by people who belonged to different social strata, ethnic groups, religious trends and sects.

The coming of the Abbasid caliphs to power (750) marked, above all, the consolidation of the feudal order in landownership. The Sunnite version of Islam became the class ideology of the feudal lords. But the conditions of the popular masses did not improve. New uprisings flared up in the caliphate, including the territory of what is present-day Afghanistan. In 755 a large uprising, known as the Sunbadh Magian uprising, spread to a number of regions from Khorasan to Azerbaijan; in 767 another popular rebellion with Ustad Aziz (Sis) at the head took place in Herat; late in the 8th century a new wave of Kharijite rebellions swept across Seistan and the disturbances continued into the 9th century. Major uprisings against the Abbasids broke out in other areas of the caliphate—in Southern Azerbaijan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Palestine.

Reviewing the events of the 7th and 8th centuries in the caliphate, which affected the fate of the peoples that played a significant role in the history of Afghanistan, it must be noted that the mid-7th century saw the beginning of the division of Muslims.[3] Standing out among them were primarily the supporters of "true Islam"—the Sunnites,* adherents of the Sunna (they hold that the caliphate is an elective office), and also the Shiites (Shiah, i.e., "the party of Ali"). The latter recognised the hereditary right to be imam–head of the Muslim community of the caliphate and supreme political leader of the state–only for Ali (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law) and his descendants. The Shiites had several sects within the framework of both moderate and extreme Shiism, Ismailism[4] being one of them. This sect has survived to the present day; its followers live in a number of Asian countries and also in Afghanistan, mainly in its northern regions.

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* The Sunnites are subdivided into four main *mazkhabs*, named after their founders: Hanifite, Shafiite, Hanbalite and Malikite schools. The overwhelming majority of Afghans are Hanifites who, as distinct from the followers of the other Islamic doctrines, are more tolerable to other religions. Apart from religious law, they allow wide application of the usual local law (*adat*) and the laws of the secular authorities. Many nomad tribes (not only Afghan but also Turkic), in which pre-Muslim patriarchal traditions were very tenacious, accepted Hanifite Islam.

The third sect, the Kharijites (insurgents) who came out against big landowners, and supported the legal and social equality of all Muslims and their dominating position over the Zimmiyas (non-Muslims). In their view, sovereign power was epitomised in the religious community, while the caliph (who had to be elected) should, in his activities, be responsible to it. An important aspect of their doctrine is that any Muslim, and any ruler for that matter, imam or caliph, should he commit a "great sin", was thereafter considered a *Kafir* or infidel, and opposition to him was God-willed. This maxim often served as ideological ground for overthrowing a ruler, or for a "holy war", but in actual fact for political struggle, rebellions and insurrections. In the territory of Afghanistan this sect was most widespread in Seistan.

Shiism, just like the Kharijite doctrine, was used by the political, and often social, opposition in the struggle against the Umayyads, Abbasids and other Sunnite rulers.

Afghanistan in the 9th-13th Centuries

The coming to power of the Abbasids, as was mentioned above, did not improve the position of the popular masses in the caliphate. The decrees lowering tax rates and cancelling some requisitions over and above the *kharaj* were either practically ignored or observed for only a brief span of time. The popular movements, originally spearheaded against the Arab rule, more and more often advanced social demands; and anti-Abbasid uprisings, led primarily by the Shiites, Kharijites and later by the Ismailians and Karmathians,* continued. In the territory of Afghanistan such uprisings occurred mainly in Seistan. The rebellions were caused by overtaxation; illegal confiscation of lands of peasant communities and local owners; collection of additional sums of money and fines from farmers, artisans and traders; abuse of power by Arab vicegerents, particularly Ali ibn Isa, vicegerent of Khorasan and Seistan, and his officials.

The first to rise were the peasants and artisans of Seistan led by the Kharijite Hamzah ibn Atraq (798). The Kharijite movement continued many years, and in consequence Seistan was actually free from caliphate control for more than 30 years. Hamzah ibn Atraq cancelled the payment of the *kharaj*. His treasury was replenished by the war booty seized by the Seistanians during attacks on Arab-controlled territories.

By the 9th century the situation in the caliphate worsened. Supported by the population, which was displeased by the mounting tax burden, the local feudal lords continued to come out against the power of the caliphs.

The Abbasid caliphate was disintegrating politically under the impact of a number of factors, connected primarily with the development of feudal relations, different socio-economic levels of the countries conquered by the Arabs, and the lack of stable economic and ethnic ties between those countries, some of which had nothing in common in terms of language and culture. The incessant popular uprisings, often used by the local feudal lords for winning political independence, greatly weakened the caliphate as a whole and its position in the provinces.

Replenishments to the state treasury were on the decline with the increase of big feudal holdings and the exemption of their owners from taxation; some of the local rulers refused to send the caliph tribute and gifts and provide troops; and expenditures on suppressing popular uprisings and feudal rebellions were growing. Together all this undermined the economic and military might of the caliphs. In fact, they had no real opportunity to resist the separatism of the hereditary aristocracy, the vicegerents' desire to consolidate their hereditary power and independence in the provinces they governed. Furthermore, apart from the local aristocracy, apart from the rulers and vicegerents of separate regions, the small feudal lords, too, on seizing lands by military force (with the help of their volunteer detachments or *ghazi**) established hereditary power in the captured territories, and sought to become independent.

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* The Karmathians, a branch of the Ismailians, proclaimed ideas of social equality, common property and common land. Their doctrine was current in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Central Asia. Late in the 9th century they set up a state in Bahrain where they abolished big landownership.

In a bid to prevent the collapse of the state, the caliphs took steps to bolster their power. To that end, they formed the Ghulam Guard out of Turkic slaves.

Fearing the emergence of another large hotbed of anti-Arab action, Mamun, son of caliph Harun-ar-Rashid (786-809), (in 809-813 Mamun was vicegerent of Khorasan), sent his troops against the ruler of the Kabul Shah dynasty which controlled, apart from Kabul, lands in Tokharistan and Qandahar and occasionally rebelled against the power of the caliphs. Despite stubborn resistance, the troops of Kabul Shah were defeated, his throne and crown were sent to Mecca, while the land tax and tribute were doubled. The domains of the Kabul Shahs were made part of Khorasan and from then on were subordinate to the Khorasan vicegerent of the Abbasids. Mosques were built in the towns. Then began the inculcation of the Sunnite doctrine of Islam, which lasted almost a century.

In referring to the political situation in the caliphate in the context of attempts by the ruling elite to consolidate their power in the conquered regions (including the territory of Afghanistan), it must be stressed that the elite sought to inculcate the Sunnite doctrine of Islam as the dominant religion, which was to justify the changes in social life brought about by the development of feudal relations. To achieve that goal, tenets of the Koran and certain *khadises* (traditions) of the Sunna were reshaped, and doctors of sacred law and theology—fakihs and ulemas, were summoned to the caliph court. The proclamation of the Sunnite doctrine of Islam in 851 as the official religion was aimed at counterposing it to religious sects whose teachings served as the ideological form of the opposition to Arab rule and to the intensifying of feudal exploitation.

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* The *ghazi* detachments (*Ghazi*—Arabic: "warrior champions of faith") consisted of urban declassé elements and impoverished peasants and nomads who volunteered to the units being formed by caliphs and some feudal lords.

Beginning with the mid-9th century the adherents of other sects and religions were persecuted. This period saw the further spread of Sufism, an ascetic mystic sect within Islam, that passively condemned wealth and preached submission, tolerance and contentment with one's lot. Poverty was said to be the ideal for the "salvation of the soul".[5]

To retain power, at least nominally, the caliphs meted out to big feudal lords the high posts of vicegerents. The latter often became hereditary owners and formed what were actually independent emirates.* Such a vicegerent in the territory of Afghanistan was Tahir ibn Husayn, former ruler of Busheng in the Herat province. Under his rule were Mavarannahr, Khorasan with Herat, and the Balkh, Kabul and Seistan regions.

Sole masters in vast territories, Tahir and his successors, known as the Tahirids (821-873), dispatched to the caliph fixed sums from every district. The Tahirids sought to buttress their power and to that end were insistently spreading Islam wherever the population professed Zoroastrianism. At the same time they took measures to regulate taxation, develop agriculture and irrigation, and issued legislation on water use. Under their rule the Kharijite movements in Khorasan and Seistan still continued, though their intensity was on the wane.

The Tahirids were far more troubled by the units of Ghazi under the command of the brothers Yaqub and Amr ibn Lays,** who had suppressed Kharijite uprisings in Seistan. Having defeated the Kharijites, they seized power in Seistan in 861 and moved north where they captured Herat, Balkh, and Ghazni, took control over Kabul and, having overthrown the Tahirid dynasty in 873, gained control over Khorasan. As he failed to conquer Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate, Amr ibn Lays made peace with the caliph and nominally recognised himself to be his vassal. Such subordination, however, was limited to mentioning the caliph's name during the Friday service in mosques and putting his name first on coins; the Saffarids did not send tribute and taxes to Baghdad.

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* Hereditary domains were created in the Maghreb countries, in Transcaucasia, Syria, Iraq, and in some areas of Iran and Central Asia.

** Yaqub and Amr ibn Lays were known as the Saffarids (from *saffar*—copper-smith. As tradition says, one of the brothers, Yaqub, was a coppersmith's apprentice in his early years).

Having consolidated their hold on the seized territories, they moved north to attack the Samanids (a local dynasty of Termez extraction), who had gained a foothold in Central Asia in 821. In the battle at Balkh, Amr ibn Lays was defeated by the Samanids, taken prisoner and executed.

After their victory over Amr ibn Lays the Samanids conquered vast territories. Their domains, which included the whole of present-day Afghanistan, stretched from the Tien Shans to the Suleiman Mountains and from Bukhara and Samarkand to the Persian Gulf. In the conquered territories, as a rule, they left administrative powers in the hands of local dynasties. These territories included Seistan, Balkh, Ghazni and other regions, whose representatives, while recognising the supreme authority of the Samanids, did not always send taxes, tribute and gifts to their capital Bukhara.

The Samanids set up a ramified administrative apparatus consisting of 10 departments (*divans*) that were in charge of taxation, lands, *waqfs*, the guards, and external relations, all of which is evidence of their efforts to strengthen central power. At the same time the Samanids handed out land in the form of *iqta*, along with the right of tax immunity, leaving members of the local dynasties as rulers of some provinces, thereby promoting separatist tendencies among them. These tendencies were spreading also among the Ghulam Guard, who often joined popular actions conducted, as before, under slogans advanced by various sects.

The greatest influence was exerted by the Carmats, who during the first four decades of the 10th century constantly stirred up risings in Khorasan, including the regions of Herat and Ghur.

In 962-963 Alp-tegin, commander of the Samanid Ghulam Guard, captured Ghazni and then Bust and remained there. After his death, his son-in-law Sabuk-tegin (977-997), who managed to hold out in the struggle against the other claimants to those lands, founded the Ghaznavid dynasty (977-1186). Sabuk-tegin not only gained a firm hold on Ghazni but undertook some successful expeditions, including one to Ghur, and moved east, towards India. He launched an offensive against the principality ruled by the

Shahi dynasty whose domains stretched from Lagman (the Kabul River valley) to the Chenab River. As a result, Sabuk-tegin captured those lands and reached Peshawar. The power of the Ghaznavids reached its peak under Mahmud (997-1030).

Apart from Afghanistan, the Ghaznavid empire included the territories of Iran, the south of Central Asia with Khorezm, and North-Western India, to which Mahmud went on 17 expeditions, waging a holy war against the "infidels". Afghan units played a significant role in his army. Caring mainly about replenishing his treasury, Mahmud waged a long and stubborn struggle against the feudal lords, and confiscated their lands, thus greatly enlarging the area of state-owned land. He used the income from the land at his own discretion. Mahmud spent lavishly on the maintenance of the troops, the central administrative apparatus, punitive expeditions, and on criminal investigation. All the recalcitrants, those suspected of disloyalty or heresy were subjected to cruel persecution; some were executed and their property was confiscated. The sources of that time say that many localities, including towns, were hard hit by famine and epidemic during Mahmud's rule, towns were devastated, rural areas were neglected and the people were brought to ruin.

Meanwhile, Mahmud, wishing to acquire the fame of an enlightened ruler and true Muslim, kept a magnificent court, where many well-known theologians, famous scientists and poets lived. Their names went down in the chronicles of world civilisation. Among them were Firdausi, al-Biruni, and Unsuri, to mention just a few. In Mahmud's days majestic mosques and palaces were built. Most famous among the architectural monuments of that time are the mosques and madrasahs in Ghazni and the Lashkar Gah (or Lashkari-Bazar) complex in Bust.[6]

But the might and power of the Ghaznavid state was shortlived. Routed in the battle at Dendanakan in 1040, by Turkmenian Seljuks, who had moved from Central Asia to Khorasan, it could no longer regain its former strength. As a result of the exhaustive struggle against the Seljuks, who were supported by the Khorasan nobility and the Ghur rulers, and also because of internecine strife, the Ghaznavids were losing one province after another. The Seljuks captured Balkh, then Herat and the whole of Khorasan and Seistan. In 1151 the capital Ghazni was seized by the rulers of the mountainous Ghur province. The city was almost entirely destroyed and burnt down. The Ghaznavids were forced to abandon their capital and up to 1186 members of that dynasty exercised their rule from Lahore.[7]

The Seljuk conquerors did not confine themselves to annexing part of the Ghaznavid possessions. In the 11th century they subjugated Iran, Asia Minor, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and the southern part of Central Asia. But the same fate befell their own state, as had been the case with many other medieval states of that kind: it soon began to disintegrate.

Only its eastern regions, including a part of Afghanistan's territory, remained for some time under sultan Sinjar (1119-1157) of the Seljuk dynasty. After his death the state collapsed. For some time Muhammad Khwarizm Shah (1200-1220) ruled in Afghanistan until his rule was discontinued by the invasion by Genghiz Khan in 1220.

Reviewing the milestones of the political history of that period, special mention should be made of the events in Ghur in the upper reaches of the Harirud between Bamian and Herat. Historical sources assert that neither the Arabs nor the Samanids managed to penetrate the province deeply, no matter how hard they tried. However there is reason to believe that Islam had spread in some regions of Ghur back in the early 9th century, for Carmat uprisings had taken place there in the early 10th century.

After several military expeditions by Mahmud of Ghazni and his son Masud (1030-1040), many of the Ghur rulers (*maliks*) were forced to obey the formidable conquerors, though already under Masud's successors they made attempts to win full independence.

The lack of pertinent data makes it impossible to probe the evolution of social relations in Ghur. Yet it is known that in the 11th century gradual feudalisation was taking place there and the communal or private lands of the peasants were forcibly taken away by the maliks.

Early in the 12th century the Ghaznavids handed over the administration of Ghur to malik Izz-ad-din, who thus became the first "great prince of Ghur" and Ghur essentially became an independent territory. In the second half of the 12th century, the Ghurids, as already noted, availing themselves of the weakening of the Seljuks and Ghaznavids, dealt a crushing blow to the latter and seized their capital Ghazni.

In 1175 the Ghurids conquered Herat and Seistan, after which Shihab-ad-din Muhammad Ghuri undertook several military expeditions to Northern India. As a result, the Ghurid military-feudal nobility established sway over an immense territory from Lahore and Multan to Bengal. In Ghur itself the residency of its rulers was at Firuzkuh. Bamian, another centre of the Ghurids, was ruled by Fakhr-ad-din Ghuri. Under his rule were also Shugnan, Vakhan, part of Tokharistan as well as part of the mountain areas of the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs. Herat, Ghazni, Kabul and Bust were major trade centres in the territory of Afghanistan.

In the years preceding the Mongol invasion, their vast domain was often attacked by Khwarizm Shahs until the Ghurid state disintegrated.[8] By 1217 the troops of the Khwarizm Shahs occupied vast territories, including all the lands of the Ghurids in the territory of Afghanistan. In the regions captured by Muhammad Ghuri in Northern India a Ghurid military commander, named Qutb-ad-din Aybak, founded a new state—the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526).

Thus the period between the 9th and the early 13th centuries in the history of Afghanistan was marked by frequent incursions of foreign conquerors and internecine strife. The invaders seized vast territories, and then redistributed the land. But no matter who owned the land—the Arab nobility, local landowners or the military-nomad aristocracy—feudal landownership kept spreading, becoming hereditary. Tribal ties were disrupted and feudalism developed steadily, though unevenly. Slavery was gradually disappearing.

As feudal landownership developed, a considerable part of the peasants fell in ever greater feudal dependence. Remaining free tillers, the peasants cultivated, on metayage rent terms, the land of the feudal lords, who usually had no farms of their own. The growing tax burden often made it impossible for the peasants to work their own plots, for they lacked water, seeds and cattle. In such cases the land plots were voluntarily left to the patronage of the feudal lords on the condition that the peasants would get part of the harvest (often not more than a quarter), a system practised not only in Oriental countries but also in Europe.

The period preceding the Mongol conquest saw certain economic revival. The local rulers took rather successful measures to advance agriculture, handicraft production and trade. Irrigation work and town building developed. In some areas industrial crops such as cotton and silk became widespread; livestock breeding was expanding, and so were the trades on its base. Apart from growing wheat, barley, fruits and vegetables, rice was sown on larger areas. Canals, *kyarizes*, wells, and protective structures to stop quick-sand movement, were built. Agriculture and the handicrafts gradually separated; along with urban semi-agrarian settlements, large feudal-type cities were growing in number. Balkh, for instance, had nearly 200,000 inhabitants. Even a small town like Panjshir had a population of 20,000. In the cities there were corporations of bakers, potters, weavers, copper-smiths, jewellers and merchants. Apart from free craftsmen who worked in their shops, craftsmen who worked for hire laboured in enterprises owned by the state or by feudal lords.

Carpet weaving, production of cotton and silk fabrics with golden and silver needlework, metal-chasing, and the making of glazed ceramics, weapons, and bronze articles reached a high level. Incidentally, the development of handicrafts in the towns did not mean that there were no craftsmen among the rural settled, nomad or semi-nomad cattle-breeding population. Thus, leather currying and metal-processing were often done by nomad craftsmen.

The cities were becoming centres of craftsmanship and trade, both domestic and foreign. Narrative sources and archaeological finds provide evidence that Afghanistan maintained trade relations with India, China, and the Mediterranean countries. Situated along trade routes Herat, Kabul, Balkh, Ghazni and Bust were major centres of handicraft production and retail and wholesale trade; they also served as trans-shipping points for caravan trade.

Ore-mining was developing, yielding big profits for the rulers. Slave labour was often used in the ore pits. Silver pits, with a few thousand workers in each, operated in the regions of Panjshir, Ghuzgan and Parvan; iron ore was mined in Ghur and near Kabul, lead and sulphur in Tokharistan, gems and semi-precious stones—ruby, lapis lazuli and turquoise—in Badakhshan, in the north of the country.

As the cities developed, their architecture improved: new palaces, caravanserais, mosques and madrasahs were constructed. Ancient ruins in that area and archaeological finds testify to the wide use of alabaster, ore, coloured glazed ceramics, and lustre painting.*

The flourishing of science, literature, poetry and prose in the early Middle Ages was reflected in the immortal poetry of Firdausi, the works of al-Biruni, the writings by Beihaqi and al'-Utbi.

The early Middle Ages played a significant role in the ethnic evolution of the Afghan (Pashtun) people.** The origin of the Pashtuns has been traced back to the ancient population of the Suleiman Mountains. The formation of the union of basically East-Iranian tribes most likely dates from the middle of the 1st millennium A.D. and was a result of the disintegration of the Ephthalite alliance.

Right up to the start of the 2nd millennium A.D. the area inhabited by the Pashtuns was confined to the Suleiman Mountains between the valleys of the Kuram River in the north and the Gomal River in the south. By that time the Pashtun ethno-linguistic community had formed, the boundaries of Pashtun territory were fixed, and the foundations of the original culture of the Pashtuns and their individual mentality were formed on the basis of the semi-nomad and nomad livestock raising economy. It was probably at the time when the group of related East-Iranian dialects were developing that the Pashto (Pushtu) language was formed.

As the productive forces developed and the population increased the Pashtun tribes gradually began to live a settled life. Dwelling in territories around the Suleiman Mountains, some even engaged in sedentary farming. Their mi-

* Painting on the glazing by a complex paint combination of silver, gold, copper, and arsenic sand dissolved in grape vinegar. It was used for decorating jugs, vases, platters, and tiles for various buildings, including mosques.

** The name "Pashtun" is used in south-western Afghan dialects and "Pakhtun" in north-eastern ones.

gration was made easier by the fact that the sedentary Irano-Tajik and Indo-Aryan population of those regions had been partially exterminated during the incursions by Genghiz Khan and his successors, and also under Tamerlane (these developments will be described in more detail below), and some of them had moved to safer regions. At first the Pashtuns occupied the Ghazni Plateau, part of the Peshawar Valley, Kohat and Bannu, and several regions in the Kabul area. Some time later they moved on towards Qandahar, to the Swat Valley, and to the territory of Zhob.

In the process of settlement, tribal relations were disrupted, and unions of tribes were formed and broke up. Property and social inequality was growing in the Pashtun society and major changes set in with the spread of Islam. Settling in the vast area between the Indus and the Hindu Kush, the Pashtuns mingled with the local population. More often than not these contacts led to the assimilation of the Pashtuns with their neighbours who became involved in the tribal and communal structure of the Pashtun society. Thus, from the 11th to the 13th century the Pashtuns mixed with a number of Turkic tribes who lived as nomads on the Ghazni Plateau. The largest of these was the Khalaj tribe (or union of tribes), predecessors of the Ghilzais, one of the biggest Pashtun tribes. The Tarklani tribe, too, populating the Bajaur area has genetic ties with the Turks. Besides, Indo-Aryan tribes and ethnic groups that populated the valleys of the Kabul and its tributaries and the lands between the Suleiman Mountains and the Indus played a certain role in the formation of some of the Pashtun tribes.

However, the main role in the evolution of the Pashtuns was played by the Tajiks and kindred Iranian tribes and ethnic groups that populated a vast region between the Hindu Kush and the Suleiman Mountains as well as the territory south of the Suleiman Mountains. The Tajiks as well as the Indian peoples, who by that time already had a feudal system that had taken firm root, undoubtedly influenced the development of feudal relations among the Pashtuns. Ample evidence of this is provided, in particular, by analysis of Pashtun socio-political, economic and state administrative terminology.

The Mongolian Conquest

Early in the 13th century, after lengthy and persistent struggle, Mongolian tribal chief Temuchin achieved political unification of Mongolia. Having assumed the title of Genghiz Khan (1206-1227), he was recognised great khan.

By that time an early-feudal society had taken shape in Mongolia, though tribal relationships remained and tribal unions (*uluses*) were at different levels of social development. Every *ulus* was hierarchically subdivided into military-administrative units, their names depending on the numerical strength of the armed units they supplied (*tumens*,* thousands, hundreds and tens). The units were headed by hereditary tribal chiefs, elders of clans and families, etc., in which the master (or feudal lord) of the tribesmen was also their military commander. Implicit obedience was total.

The armed force thus formed was well organised and disciplined. Being nomads, the Mongols created a very mobile and manoeuvrable cavalry whose actions, facilitated by the combat equipment of that time (catapults, wall-breaching machines and weapons) determined their success in battles against enemy units recruited from among the settled population of divided feudal state formations.

The name of Genghiz Khan is synonymous with one of the most arduous periods in the medieval history of the many countries invaded by his troops.

Having waged several successful campaigns, the Mongols extended their power to the territories of China, Korea, Tibet, Eastern Turkestan, Central and Western Asia, Transcaucasia, Iran, Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, the areas north of the Black Sea, and the lower reaches of the Don and Volga rivers. As distinct from many other conquerors in the East, Genghiz Khan and his military commanders ravaged whole regions in a systematic and organised manner, destroyed irrigation systems turning fertile oases into desert land, burned down and wiped off towns and villages. With a 200,000-strong force they often totally annihilated a population that could offer resistance; thousands of craftsmen were turned into slaves and sent away to Mongolia.

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* Ten thousand.

Afghanistan did not escape the common lot.[9] Having attacked the Khwarizm Shahs in 1219 and conquered Central Asia by 1220, the Mongols marched on to Afghanistan. In 1221 they seized Herat, exterminated the whole garrison, the greater part of the population and took away many craftsmen, including all the Herat weavers. Other cities and regions of Afghanistan, too, including Balkh and Talikan, were sacked. The Nusrat-Kukh fortress was razed to the ground and its entire population killed.

Jalal-ad-din, the son of Muhammad Khwarizm Shah, tried to hold off the Mongols. He mustered an army of 70,000 in Ghazni (where he was vicegerent) from among the volunteer troops of Khorasan, Ghur, and the detachments of the Khalajes, Afghans and Turkmenians, and moved against the Mongols. He pitched a camp near Parvan, in the upper reaches of the Logar River in the Kabul Valley. In the battle at Parvan the Mongols were defeated. This bolstered the confidence of the Afghan population. Though strife among the feudal lords ultimately made Jalal-ad-din flee to India and then to Iran, in many towns and settlements anti-Mongolian uprisings flared up. One of the largest was in Herat, where unsurgents killed the Mongol vicegerent, destroyed the garrison and, having fortified the city walls, got ready to repel the attacking Mongolian troops. The siege of Herat lasted nearly half a year, and after its seizure in 1222 the city and its outskirts were ravaged and ruined and the whole of the population massacred.* It was not until 1236 that Herat was restored and populated by an order from Genghiz Khan's son Ogodai.

The Mongols met with protracted and stubborn resistance in Gurzivan and Bamiyan. During the siege of the latter, Genghiz Khan's grandson was killed. Infuriated with the news, Genghiz Khan ordered that the town be taken by storm and razed to the ground. The same fate befell many cities of Ghur and Seistan.

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* The sources relate the fate of 40 residents of the city who survived by a miracle and lived in the city ruins for more that 10 years. That not only Herat proper but all the area around it was destroyed is witnessed from the date provided by Sayfi Herawi. These people, who had almost gone wild, once had to go a distance of about 300 kilometres, having despoiled a caravan-load of silk, which was to be exchanged for grain. (See I. P. Petrushevsky, *The Writings by Sayfi*, pp. 137-138, in Russian.)

After the seizure of Kabul and Qandahar the Mongols made several expeditions to India. Passing across the Kuram Valley, they ravaged the lands populated by Afghans. Kabul was so badly destroyed that the city practically ceased to exist. What remained in its place was a settlement populated by an Afghan tribe.

The local Afghan feudal lords offered no resistance to the Mongols. What is worse still, many of them, in contrast to the inhabitants of the cities and settlements, showed not only loyalty but even servility to the invaders. Some of them received permission from Mongol khans to retain control over various regions. But even when such permission was given, officials were sent to watch over the ruler's activities and see to it that taxes were properly collected and the khan's instructions observed. As a rule, Genghiz Khan and his successors appointed their own vicegerents in large regions, mostly Mongol princes and military commanders.

To tighten their grip on the seized territory, the Mongols resettled Turko-Mongol and Mongol nomads there. These resettlements, carried out repeatedly in the 13th to the early 14th centuries, had a definite influence on the evolution of the peoples now populating the central parts of Afghanistan. It is commonly thought that the Hazaras, living in the Uruzgun province and in some other regions and cities of Afghanistan (including Kabul and Herat), originated from those tribes. Their name is derived from the word "hazara", meaning "thousand".*

In the middle of the 13th century the Mongol empire broke up into several *uluses*, nominally subordinate to the great khan of Mongolia. The territories in South-West and West Asia became the *ulus* of Hulagu (1256-1265), a grandson of Genghiz Khan.

In 1256 Hulagu, who continued conquests in Asia, destroyed the state of the Ismailites and the Alamut fortress, its centre. Having seized Baghdad, he executed Mustasim, caliph of the Abbasids (1258). Having fixed the northern border of his domain along the Caucasian range, Hulagu Khan annexed vast territories, including Iran, Kurdistan, Iraq with Baghdad, upper Mesopotamia, the eastern part of

*** The name "hazara" was given to a tribe providing one thousand warriors.**

Asia Minor, Azerbaijan, part of Armenia, the Merv oasis, and part of Afghanistan (except for the Balkh region).* Georgia, Cilician Armenia, the Trebizond Empire, the Rum Sultanate and Cyprus became the vassals of the Hulagus and paid tribute to them. The Kurts (a local dynasty that first ruled in Ghur and later extended its rule to other regions of Afghanistan) were also their vassals.

In 1261 Hulagu assumed the title of Ilkhan** and was granted an investiture from the great Khan Khubilai (1259-1294) for the whole of Iran and newly-conquered territories,*** including a part of Afghanistan.[10] Bordering on the hostile Golden Horde in the North, the Chagatai *ulus* along the Amu Darya River in the East, and the Mameluke Sultanate in Egypt in the West, Hulagu Khan and the Ilkhans who succeeded him waged incessant wars requiring constant expenditures. Heavy spending was caused also by the maintenance of the Ilkhan's court, the military-nomad elite and the fiscal apparatus.

The Mongol invasion led to a redivision of land: the lands that had belonged to the Khwarizm Shahs and the local feudal aristocracy—most of whom had been exterminated, banished or simply fled from the country—went over to the elite of the military-nomad tribes. The change in the ethnic set-up of the ruling class caused changes in the tenor of life and in the goals the new rulers set themselves.

The ruling class consisted of the military-nomad nobility (it not only played a major political role in the state, but was greater in number); remnants of the local sedentary aristocracy, including the military; and high Muslim theologians who had retained their influence. Speaking about the set-up of the ruling class, the following must be emphasised.

The nomad nobility (including the Mongol princes from among the Genghizids), the tribal chiefs and military commanders, who seized the conquered lands or were given land for their service and then as private holdings, were becoming big feudal lords. The greater part of the nobility, supported by the tribes and having an opportunity of plundering vast territories that had been given to them by the Ilkhans or under the *iqta* rights, were ultimately interested in decentralising the state, and that trend became obvious already under Arghun Khan (1284-1291). Continuing to live a nomad life, the nobility was very hostile to the local aristocracy and the sedentary population, looking upon it merely as an object of exploitation.

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* Balkh and Mavarannahr were part of the *ulus* of the descendants of Genghiz Khan's son Chagatai.

** Ilknans, literally "the khans of a tribe" (*il*: tribe); the state of the Ilkhans, or of the Hulagus, as it is also called, existed about one hundred years, from 1256 to 1353.

*** The conquered territories—the *uluses*—were under the power of the descendants of Genghiz Khan; great khan was the title attributed to Genghiz Khan's grandson Khubilai who was the ruler in Mongolia and China.

The policy of plunder pursued by the nobility, the intensification of feudal exploitation, abuses and violence with regard to the tax-paying population, which was already ruined in the course of the Mongol invasion, forced the peasants and craftsmen to leave their native lands, undermined the country's economy as a whole, primarily agriculture, which was the basis of the economy. Thus, by the end of the 13th century merely one-tenth of the arable land was under cultivation.

Another part of the Mongol nobility, less numerous but more far-sighted, sought contacts with the local aristocracy, including the military, the merchants and Muslim theologians (the latter had a great influence on the population), and took measures to restore the disrupted economy, the irrigation systems, agriculture, handicrafts and trade. This policy was pursued, in particular, by Ogodai, Munke and specifically by Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), Mongol emir Nawruz, who was vicegerent of Khorasan, and others.

Throughout the entire period of Mongol rule these two opposite trends were in severe conflict with one another.

The surviving part of the local aristocracy felt insecure in their domains, for they depended on the Ilkhans and their vicegerents who could expropriate their land and property to their own benefit. That part of the ruling class sought increasingly to strengthen their economic and political position and wished to see the Hulagid state decentralised. The strongest among them achieved a certain degree of independence, as was the case, for instance, with the local Kurt dynasty—it ruled in Ghur in 1245-1389, and in the mid-13th century created a vassal principality with Herat as the capital.

The military, on the contrary, advocated a strong central power with stronger Ilkhans and tried to influence them by helping to improve the administration mechanism, including the fiscal system.

The Muslim theologians, owing to the Mongols' relative religious tolerance, retained their land holdings. Furthermore, the Mongol khans freed them from all taxes and duties even before they adopted Islam. Connected with commerce, they, just like the military aristocracy, advocated centralisation of the state and restoration of agriculture and the handicrafts.

These trends within the ruling class played a major role in the historical development of the state of the Ilkhans. The main forms of landownership in it were the *divani*, or the state-owned land; the *inju*, or *khass inju*, that is, the land owned by the khan and his relatives; the *mulq*, or the land privately owned by Mongol, and partly by local, feudal lords; and the *waqf* lands, conventional feudal land grants: *iqta, idrar* and *mukasseh*.[11]

The profits from the *divani* lands were collected through the state financial apparatus or farmed out to be spent for covering state expenditures. A great part of the lands was given out as conventional ownership mainly to the nomad-military nobility, used for producing food for the troops and partially went to the military in the bureaucratic apparatus. Due to these grants the area of state-owned land, from which the entire profit went to the treasury, was shrinking. The profits from the *inju* lands were used to cover the expenses of the Mongol court, princes and other relatives of Genghiz Khan and his offspring, their vassals attached to their hordes, or were used on the basis of personal commendation or patronage; sometimes the *inju* lands were given by Ilkhans to feudal lords for use or just as a gift.

The *iqta* lands, the conventional land grants, while juridically state-owned, turned into hereditary fiefs of the military elite. The lands, given by the Mongols to Muslim theologians of various ranks as *waqf* lands, were tax-free. While the owners of those lands, and also *inju* and *mulq* landholders, collected taxes practically without control.

The terms *idrar* and *mukasseh* meant conventional grants. Thus, the *idrar* was a hereditary grant of rent as a fief, while the term *mukasseh* implied lands and real estate.

In the 14th century, during the rule of the Ilkhans, there already functioned the system called *soyurgal*, when the landowner was given the right to immunity. I. P. Petrushevsky stressed in his fundamental research *Agriculture and Agrarian Relations in Iran in the 13th-14th Centuries* that in order to understand the historical significance of immunity one must turn to Marx's observation that in feudal society the feudal "functions of general and judge were attributes of landed property".[12]

The pasture lands of the nomad tribes were a special category of land in the state of the Ilkhans. Those lands legally belonged to the tribe but in practice were controlled by the tribal elite. The lands of the rural communities and of the landowning peasants who had left the communities accounted for a meagre portion of the land. At the time when feudalism developed, that category of land was doomed to extinction.

Apart from taxes and duties that existed also in the previous years, introduced under the Mongols were new taxes and duties and extraordinary collection of food and forage for the army, requisitions for the maintenance of emirs, clerks, messengers, tax-collectors, as well as labour conscription and provision of billeting. There existed the practice of distributing so-called *berats*, giving officials and the military the right to receive a salary or pension in some region or other. Often several *berats* were given to one and the same region. One of the newest reforms effected under the Mongols—under Ghazan Khan, to be more precise—was the attachment of peasants to the land.

At first the Mongols extended the practice of attaching nomads and peasants to their master in keeping with the military-administrative division of Mongolian society into tumens, thousands, hundreds and tens. Then the enslaving of the taxed population, which was a logical outcome of the development of feudal relations, took its final shape under Ilkhan Ghazan.

Lenin pointed out that under feudalism non-economic coercion may take different forms, "ranging from the peasant's serf status to his lack of rights in the social estates".[13] Given feudal property in land, which made up the basis of feudalism, one of these forms was attaching the farmer not to the feudal lord but to the place where he paid his taxes and carried out his duties.

In 1303, under an order issued by Ghazan Khan the peasants were included in the tax lists of the regions where they lived and were not permitted to change their place of residence. During the time when agriculture was being ruined, irrigation structures destroyed, peasants and handicraftsmen taken away as prisoners and exploitation intensified, masses of rural inhabitants fled to the mountains, and joined bands of robbers. The mass departure of peasants brought further deterioration of agriculture and reduced the profits of the feudal lords and the treasury. Therefore a special point of the edict attaching the peasants to the place of taxation envisaged the right of the feudal lord and the state to bring back fugitive peasants by force within a period of 30 years since their escape.

An important measure to strengthen central power was the regulation of the administration machinery under Ghazan Khan, particularly the fiscal system. Under his edicts tax rates were established (and partially reduced), and the *berats* and some of the most burdensome duties (as, for instance, billeting rights) were cancelled. To promote handicrafts and trade, the *tamga* tax was reduced for craftsmen and merchants, and in some regions it was even cancelled altogether; slave craftsmen working in large workshops (*karkhanahs*) were transferred to the quitrent system, without freeing them from slavery. The slaves, whose numbers during the expeditions were replenished with prisoners, were widely used as craftsmen, in agriculture, construction, and so on. This enabled historians to view the period of Mongol rule as a period of revival of slavery.

Among the reforms effected by Ghazan Khan that were, in some way or other, connected with the regulation of taxation, mention should be made of the establishment of a unified system of weights and measures and of a monetary unit—the dirhem (2.15 grams of silver).

Ghazan Khan adopted Islam, and leaning on the local nobility and Muslim theologians he left their *waqf* lands intact. Simultaneously, the *mulq* area was increased. But that was done mainly by granting the local holders the neglected lands, provided they would cultivate, irrigate and populate them. Not only the Mongol elite but all Mongol warriors without exception were given land under the *iqta* right, the hereditary character of this grant was formalised, and so was the right of the iqtadars to tax immunity. An iqtadar could not sell the land grant. But, under the khan's order, it could be taken away from him for negligence of duties and service evasion.[14]

The policy of centralisation pursued by Ghazan Khan was strongly opposed by the military-nomad elite. A number of feudal rebellions erupted at the time. All of them were quelled, though some concessions had to be made. The reforms effected by Ghazan Khan yielded some results, but they could not prevent the collapse of the state of the Ilkhans.

Among the vassal territories subordinate to that state a special role was played by the Kurt principality with Ghur as its nucleus. At the time of the Khwarizm Shahs a considerable part of Ghur was subjugated. Rukn-ad-din, the ruler of the Khaysar mountain district—a rather small territory in Ghur—who did not recognise their authority, retained independence. The Khaysar fortress held out also during the invasion of the Mongols. Rukn-ad-din received official permission from Genghiz Khan to rule Khaysar and Ghur. His successor Shams-ad-din Kurt (1245-1278) maintained relations with the Mongols and even took part in their expedition to India in 1246. During the struggle for power between Munke and other claimants Shams-ad-din backed Munke, who showed his gratitude by handing him down the administration of a number of towns and regions.

Later, under Abagha Khan (1265-1282), the son of Ilkhan Hulagu, Shams-ad-din managed to get an edict confirming his right to administration. Among other towns and regions named in the edict, Afghanistan was mentioned as a region populated by Afghan tribes in the area of the Suleiman Mountains and between the upper reaches of the Helmand in the north-west and the Indus in the south-east.

The sources of the time do not contain any detailed information about the Afghans. It is known, however, that during this period Afghan tribes were becoming feudalised and that a hierarchy existed among the Afghan tribal chiefs who governed their small domains and had a subordinate tax-paying population dependent on them, as well as slaves. At the same time the Afghans continued to settle not only the territory of present-day Afghanistan but also that of India. The Afghans played a meaningful role in the political history of India in the 13th century, specifically during the rule of the Delhi sultan Ghiyath-ad-din Balban (1265-1287), the Hildji dynasty (1290-1321) and also later.[15]

Despite numerous military expeditions of the Mongols to regions populated by the Afghans, they failed to subdue many of the Afghan tribes. This is clear, for instance, from a letter to Shams-ad-din Kurt written by Afghan chief Almar, who had consolidated his position in Teri. In the letter he declared that never before, under no sultan did his "fathers and grandfathers serve the Mongols or pay tribute to the infidels".

Some of the Afghan maliks voluntarily recognised the power of the Kurts. Among the Afghans who had long resisted the Kurts were Almar from Teri and also the chiefs of the tribes from the Mastung and Ghazni areas. On one occasion the besieged Afghans held a fortress for several months on a mountainous island on a lake near Ghazni. The Kurts had to build ships and boats to seize the fortress. Having encircled the Afghans, the Kurt soldiers forced the besieged, after 12 days of incessant fighting, to surrender and received a contribution of 10,000 dinars, 10 packs of silk fabric, 5 Arab thoroughbreds, 50 slaves, and valuables. Besides, the Afghans were obliged to pay them annual tribute.[16]

It took the Kurts several years to conquer the Afghan lands. At the turn of the 14th century the ruin and impoverishment of the population of the Kurt principality, and of the whole of the Hulagid state at that, were so enormous, and the flight of the tax-paying population reached such disastrous proportions, that not only the Kurts, but also the Mongols, who sought the return of the fugitives for fiscal reasons, were compelled to make considerable concessions. Emir Nawruz, for instance, who had been sent by Ghazan Khan to Khorasan, ordered the rulers of Farah, Isfizar and Seistan to return the people who had fled to them from Herat and its outlying districts and then issued a decree exempting the Herat population from taxation for a term of two years.

Speaking about the position of the tax-paying population in the Kurt state, mention should be made of the *karkhanah*, the profit from which went to the ruler. Widespread at that period were *karkhanahs* for the manufacture of bricks and tile, which was obviously caused by the need to fortify city walls.

The revival of the slave-owning system in many countries during the Mongol rule also took place in the Kurt principality. The sources say that in artisan production, with the status of slaves, apart from the local people, there worked prisoners or persons punished for some offence; many were in chains.

It is significant that under the Kurts Herat did not lose its importance as a trade centre, which is evidenced by the fact that bazaars and caravanserais were built in the city. Another interesting fact is that Ogodai's decree on the restoration of Herat in 1236 was issued on the merchants' advice.

Just as in other vassal territories, the Mongols sent their representatives to the Kurt maliks. Various officials resided permanently in Herat for inspection work. Herat and Ghur were under the direct control of the Kurt maliks. The rest of the principality was administered by feudal rulers who depended (as vassals) on the Kurts. Among them were Ghurs, Afghans, Tajiks, and also the military-nomad Mongol elite. The largest Mongol settlements were in Badghis. The conflicts that erupted between the Mongol elite and the Kurts often grew into armed clashes. In some instances the Kurts deliberately aggravated relations with the Hulagid rulers by suspending the delivery of taxes and tribute to them, executing officials they had sent, and backing the feudal lords opposed to the Ilkhans. Behind this policy of the Kurts was the intention of the local sedentary nobility to create an independent domain, making use of the hatred among the masses towards the Mongol invaders. Owing to this, the Kurts managed to deal heavy blows at Mongol troops and pursue a relatively independent course.

To win support of the people, the Kurt maliks sought popularity among them and set out to bolster their position among Sunnite theologians. They built mosques and madrasahs, bestowed alms to the poor, and made offerings of money and property to dervishes. Acting as champions of the norms of Islam and morality, the Kurts ordered that drunkards and profligates should have their beards shaved off, be chained, and used for work in *karkhanahs* together with slaves.

The striving of the Kurt maliks for independence caused dissatisfaction and apprehension among the Mongols. Their troops repeatedly attacked the lands of the Kurts, including the capital Herat. Thus, in 1270, under an order from Abagha Khan, the entire population was evicted from Herat. In 1298-1299 the city was besieged by the troops of a Mongol prince, later known as Oeljeitu Khan (1304-1316), but, having received 30,000 gold coins and ravaged the city outskirts, he rescinded the siege.

In 1306 the city was again besieged by Mongol troops headed by Danishmand Bahadur, and later by his son Bujay. After a siege lasting five months and fierce battles the city was taken. The Mongols destroyed all the fortifications and many buildings in Herat. In 1319 Mongol prince Yasawur sacked the city outskirts. In 1358 Herat was again besieged by Mongol troops, however they failed to capture the city and the siege was raised. But the suburbs were destroyed; the population was plundered.

Speaking about the numerous instances of devastation of Herat in the 13th and 14th centuries, one is to mention forays by groups of nomads who did not recognise the power of the Hulagids. They often raided the Herat area, sacking the city and its environs.

A negative impact on Herat's economic life was doubtlessly exerted by the internecine strife and by the rebellions of vassals. The rebellions by the rulers of Isfizar and Farah were especially wide-scale. Herat's location at the crossroads of major trade routes, with Mongol-ravaged Merv and Balkh offering no competition, coupled with the striving of the Kurts for independence and their efforts to ensure the security of their capital, improve the city and enlarge its population were all factors that definitely facilitated the revival of that area. Taking advantage of a lull in attacks from the outside, the Kurts continued to fight successfully the recalcitrant vassals, forcing them to pay taxes and indemnities, and restored or rebuilt city fortifications. The second city wall, about a farsakh long (7-8 kilometres), scaled the northern and eastern parts of the city. It was built under Muizz-ad-din Kurt (1331-1370).

Built in Herat under the Kurts were the citadel Ikhtiar-ad-din, the palaces Bargakh and Koshk, madrasahs, the tomb of malik Muizz-ad-din, bazaars and caravanserais. The walls of many houses were decorated beautifully with ornaments. Most fascinating were the walls of the Bargakh palace built under malik Ghiyath-ad-din (1307-1329). Following the malik's instructions, the big mosque, which had been built in Herat under the Ghurids, was restored.

The subjugation of vassal territories, the strengthening and growth of Herat, and the measures to improve it, all show that the Kurt influence was waxing and that the patronage of the Mongol rulers was increasingly oppressing them. Beginning with the early 14th century the Kurt maliks more and more often refused not only to go to the great Khan to express their respect but even to fulfil the direct duties of vassals—to pay taxes and tribute and supply troops for their suzerain. The displeased Ilkhans responded with threats. But the victory of Ghiyath-ad-din over a Chagatai prince, who had opposed the Hulagids, strengthened the position of the Kurt rulers at the Ilkhans' court. Muizz-ad-din, son of Ghiyath-ad-din, formally recognised himself to be a vassal of the Mongols, but after the death of Ilkhan Abu Said (1335) he ordered that his name be mentioned during religious service at mosques on Fridays as an independent ruler and that it be inscribed on coins.

The disintegration of the Hulagid state, which had concluded by 1353, offered the Kurts an opportunity to consolidate the independence of their state. They established friendly relations with Timur (Tamerlane) who by that time had extended his power to Central Asia, and exchanged embassies with him. But these relations, which seemed to be well established and even sealed by marital ties, proved to be shortlived in the end.

Timur and the Timurids

In the last thirty years of the 14th century several states were attacked by Timur (1336-1405), the son of emir Taragay of the Barlas in the Kesh province (now Shahrisyabz). Having gained a firm position in Mavarannahr and actually being head of the state (formally the Chagatai princes were the rulers of Mavarannahr), Timur undertook numerous expeditions of conquest to Iran, Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, to the Volga, Siberia, the Tien Shans, to

Khwarizm, Afghanistan, Northern India, and intended to subjugate China.[17]

Leaving a trail of death and destruction, killing hundreds of thousands of people, and turning farming oases and cities, partially restored after the invasion of the Mongols, into barren land, Timur wanted to create a vast state with strong central power. His goal also was to establish control over the main trade routes from Europe to Asia that ran across Iran and Afghanistan, and simultaneously to close the caravan routes alongside the Black and Caspian Seas.

The conquest by Timur of the territories of what is now Afghanistan began in 1370 with the seizure of Balkh. Having established friendly relations with the Kurts, Timur, however, soon demanded that they recognise his supreme authority. The Kurts refused to obey and he marched on their lands. Having enlisted the support of Muhammad, the ruler of Sarakhs, who had come over to his side, he seized Jam, Kohe-Siyakh, and Fushenj and besieged Herat in 1381. After repeated but futile attempts to capture Herat, Timur called upon the besieged to surrender and promised that if they complied with his request he would leave the city whole and the people unharmed. But after they surrendered he ordered the population to pay a large contribution; 200 eminent persons and mullahs were forcefully resettled to Kesh, the native city of Timur, the iron gates of Herat were also taken to Kesh, and the city walls, built under Muizz-ad-din, were destroyed.

Fearing an uprising, Timur left a garrison and a vicegerent in Herat and prohibited the restoring of the city walls and the construction of new fortifications. His apprehensions were not unfounded. In 1383, the people of Herat, partly consisting of Ghurs, set the town afire, annihilated the garrison and started an uprising. The insurgents were backed by units of warriors who had arrived from Ghur.

The Herat uprising was suppressed with utmost cruelty by troops of Timur's son, Miran Shah. Simultaneously, an expedition was sent to Ghur accompanied by mass extermination of the population; then the troops invaded Seistan, where many cities were ravaged, especially Bust; and other areas that were part of the Kurts' principality, including Qandahar and Kabul, were also sacked. The invading troops built towers with the heads of the dead bodies of the city's defenders. In 1389 the last of the Kurts were killed.

In 1392, Timur made a gift of the lands south-west of the Hindu Kush, largely populated by Afghan tribes, to his grandson Pir Muhammad, though many of the mountain regions in those areas had not been actually seized by Timur. He appointed his son Shahrukh ruler of Khorasan, Seistan, Gurgan, and Mazenderan, with Herat as the centre of the domain. During his Indian expedition in 1398 Timur captured some of the territories populated by Afghan tribes (a district in Peshawar, part of Bajaur, Swat, and other territories). However, Timur failed to subjugate many of the tribes.

In the struggle against the Afghans, Timur and his successors cruelly punished the unruly and made wide use of the strife among the various tribes and tribal groups. Timur also enlisted Afghan tribal chiefs with their troops in his military operations. Participation in these expeditions prevented the Afghans from carrying on productive work, increased the power and wealth of the tribal chiefs, and touched off the migration of Afghan tribes that settled in India, which later led to the emergence of the Afghan dynasties Lodi and Sur that ruled in India in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Afghan chiefs, on their return from predatory expeditions to India, received part of the spoils, and sometimes also land grants. This tended to speed up the feudalisation of Afghan society. Besides, after entire regions were devastated during the invasion of the troops of the Mongols and Timur, the Afghan tribes began to undertake seasonal migrations from the mountains to the flat country, to the vast pasturelands in the Ghazni area and the valleys of the Helmand, Kabul and Kunar, practically seizing those territories. As a result of conflicts with the rulers of Kabul and Ghazni, part of the tribes (for instance, the Yusufzais) migrated, reaching the Peshawar Valley through the Khyber Pass, and settled there in the latter half of the 15th century.

The 13th and 14th centuries marked the beginning of the gradual transition of the Afghans from nomad livestock breeding to sedentary farming, which was mainly caused by the internal processes underway in Afghan society. The number of dependent tribesmen (*khamsaya*) was increasing not only within the tribes; often whole clans and tribes became dependent; the *khamsaya* grew in number as they were joined by members of various social and ethnic groups, including those from among the indigenous population of the areas seized by the Afghans and also those who had moved from India. The process of property stratification within a number of tribes led to the intensification of the struggle for pasturelands, undermining tribal relations and enriching the elite. Tribes joined in alliances, which no longer consisted of kindred tribes alone. Within the tribes themselves there emerged privileged hereditary families, the khan-hels, from whose midst there came forth chiefs of whole tribes—khans.

The feudalisation of Afghan tribes proceeded under the influence of and in interaction with the feudal environment, i.e., the cities and agricultural oases, where the feudal system was already established. This interaction had a number of major consequences. It proved very important in that the Afghan tribes went over from patriarchal and tribal relations to feudalism by-passing the slave-owning stage. Among other significant aspects was the unequal development of feudal relations among various tribes (also depending on the places of their settlement), the lack, for quite a long time, of cities with a purely Afghan population, the relatively poor level of the handicrafts among the Afghans who remained active as intermediaries in transit trade along the caravan routes from Iran and Central Asia to India, and the formation of Povindah tribes specialising in that trade, etc.[18]

The further feudalisation of Afghan society was also influenced by the specifics of the social, economic and political development of the state formations, of which Afghanistan was part—the state of the Herat Timurids, the state of the Great Moghuls and the state of the Safavids.

After Timur's death in 1405 his state was rent by internecine strife and part of the territory he had seized fell away. The Timurid rulers retained power in Central Asia, part of Iran and in Afghanistan. In 1409 Timur's son Shahrukh gained a firm stand in Herat and made it his capital, while a considerable number of the state's regions were granted to Timurid princes. Thus, his son Ulugh Beg received Mavarannahr and soon became essentially its sovereign ruler (1409-1449); Samarkand was the central city. Ghazni, Qandahar and Kabul were given to another son of Shahrukh, Qaydu; and Tokharistan was granted to Muhammad Jahangir.

During the rule of Shahrukh (1409-1447) part of the Abdali tribe migrated to the Qandahar region.

Shahrukh did not wage large-scale wars of conquest. Military operations during his rule were conducted mainly to suppress uprisings, mutinies, and internecine strife. Among the most potent enemies of the Herat Timurids were the chiefs of the Turkmenian tribal confederation Qara-Qoynlu, who captured Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kurdistan and Arab Iraq and sought to form an independent state. But, having suffered a number of defeats from Shahrukh, they recognised themselves to be his vassals.

Under Shahrukh taxes were fixed, duties determined, and measures were taken to develop farming, irrigation, the handicrafts and trade. Much attention was devoted to Herat, the capital of the state. The city was adorned with magnificent buildings: the Mosalla ensemble with the mausoleums of Shahrukh's wife and son, a madrasah, the tomb of Ansari, a library founded by prince Baysunghur, and gardens and parks.

Shahrukh's death was followed by a struggle for power and internecine strife. Mutinies became more violent, and devastating incursions by the Hazaras and Nikudaris into the areas of Ghur, Qandahar and Farah became more frequent. Among the short-term rulers of Herat were Shahrukh's son Ulugh Beg and his grandsons Abdul Latif and Abdul Qasim Babur. In 1458 Herat was seized by Abu Said, the ruler of Mavarannahr. But during his rule the internecine strife did not cease. In 1469 he was killed.

After a period of stubborn struggle the Herat throne was occupied by Timurid prince Sultan Husayn Baiqara (1469-1506) who conquered the whole of Khorasan. During his rule Herat became more prominent as a major city and a centre of the handicrafts, trade, culture and the arts in the Middle and Near East. At that time the famous poet, scientist and statesman Ali Sher Nawai, poet Abdurrahman Jami, historians Mirkhwand and Khwandemir, the great master of miniature painting Behzad and many others lived in Herat.

New palaces, madrasahs, hospitals, baths, bridges, gardens and parks appeared in the city. Repair and reconstruction of the central mosque of Herat, built under the Ghurids, were conducted on a broad scale. However, concentrating on the development of the arts and culture and on the construction activities of the Herat Timurids, medieval authors almost never describe that part of the city where the working population lived. Apart from the grand buildings in the city centre, there were overcrowded districts with narrow dirty streets, without running water—hotbeds of diseases. Only on rare occasions, when describing splendid buildings and shady gardens or the beneficence of a ruler, do the sources mention that under Sultan Husayn running water was to be found only in the vicinity of the central mosque, or that thousands of people died during an epidemic of the plague in Herat and its environs. They note, as if in passing, that water and air contamination was the cause of the epidemic.[19]

Under the Timurids Herat was a major centre of domestic and foreign trade. Trade and the handicrafts were concentrated along the main bazaar routes intersecting the city and at small marketplaces in the city districts.

Apart from locally made articles and foodstuffs from the environs, goods and livestock were brought to Herat from all over the state. Various goods, be it articles made by craftsmen, raw materials, livestock or foodstuffs, were all sold at special places. Horses, for instance, were sold at the fortress walls not far from the Melik Bazaar. Handicraft articles of a common type were sold in several buildings called *tims*. The *tims* most probably had links with handicraft corporations known as *firkas* or *asnafs*, though there is no direct evidence of this.

Many sources mention trade relations of the Timurid state with countries of the East and Europe. Though Balkh, Qandahar, Ghazni and Kabul were major trade cities whereto caravans arrived from Iran, Central Asia, India and China, the centre of foreign trade at the time was Herat. Ambassadors arrived from other countries, and there were ambassadors from Moscow too (1464-1465).[20] It is known that the Timurids sent ambassadors from Herat to India, China and even to Grand Duke Ivan III of Muscovy (1490). These relations were more commercial than diplomatic. Among the export items were precious stones—Badakhshan ruby, topaz, lapis lazuli, turquoise—brought to the Middle

East and Europe, and Ghazni apples and madder delivered to India. The Timurid state imported mainly luxury goods, chinaware, and fine cloth.

The city suburbs stretched in a continuous line, about 10 farsakhs long, and were like small towns and settlements located close to one another. The Herat suburbs were subdivided into nine districts, or *bulyuks*, which made up the Herat region and were administratively subordinate to the capital. The subdivision into *bulyuks* was done on the land-tenure principle, i.e., the area irrigated from one and the same canal comprised a *bulyuk*. The *bulyuks* were named after the canals that irrigated them.

In the Herat province life bustled most in Obah, Shafelyan, Isfizar, Fushenj, Kusuviye, and Badghis. The Timurid rulers also built baths, bridges and pavilions at mineral springs in the Herat province. Some of the towns in the province were densely populated and had large bazaars. The Isfizar bazaar, for instance, had 1,200 shops.

Farming was developing parallel with trade and the handicrafts; the area of irrigated, and hence cultivated, land was expanding; and irrigation canals and *kiryaz* systems were built. Economic advancement in the state of the Herat Timurids was significant; though, the sources say, it never reached the 12th-century level (prior to the Mongol invasion). But still, in the 15th century most of the districts had an economic specialisation of their own. Sayavushan, for instance, was a grapevine-growing area with crops reaching 30,000 *harvars*.* The Badghis region was famous for its pistachios. It also provided Herat with timber, fuel, livestock and grain. Obah, lying in the foothills, was distinguished for fertile soil, white-marble quarries, and a hot mineral spring. A similar spring was in Shafelyan, which was famous also for its lead pits, as well as fruits—apples, apricots, plums, peaches and musk-melons.

Under the Timurids the feudal system was further developed, which was seen in the spread of *soyurgal*. Territories of various size, from a village to an administrative region, were granted as a *soyurgal*. It is known, for instance, that Timurid Abul Qasim Babur (1452-1457) granted the whole of Seistan as a *soyurgal* to emir Halil.

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* *Harvar*—literally "a donkey-carried pack", a weight ranging from 160 to 300 kilograms in various regions.

While recognising the supreme power of the head of the Timurid state, the holders of large *soyurgals* could themselves give out *soyurgals* to smaller feudal lords, their vassals, who had a staff of officials, a court and a large military reserve contingent. Thus, late in the 15th century the armed contingent of emir Khusraw, who had a *soyurgal* right to the possession of lands from the Amu Darya to the Hindu Kush, was some 30,000 strong.

Big feudal lords made independent expeditions of conquest and levied taxes in the seized territories. Shaikh Ali Khan, the Timurid ruler of Kabul, attacked Indian provinces in the first 30 odd years of the 15th century, and for some time levied duties from several regions of Punjab.

The sources inform us also about other forms of grants—the *tarkhan* deeds. Those possessing them had, apart from immunity, all sorts of privileges in the distribution of war spoils, were not subject to legal responsibility until committing nine violations of the law, etc. Usually the word *tarkhan* was added to the name of persons receiving such deeds.

The holdings of Muslim religious institutions and those of outstanding Muslim theologians, which made up a considerable part of the land, also enjoyed the right of tax immunity.

Deeds lifting some or all taxes were often given to the owners of *mulqs* (private lands). Such lands, which were called free *mulqs*, were sometimes huge and brought immense profit. The poet Jami, for instance, received an income of over 100,000 dinars annually from the lands in the Herat province.

This policy of the Timurids resulted in the reduction of the influx into the treasury from taxes, the weakening of central power and the spread of separatist tendencies among the feudal lords.

To replenish the treasury, the authorities increased land- and poll-tax rates (*kharaj* and *sarshomar*), and taxes on gardens; fixed *kharaj* rates prior to harvesting; introduced new duties; and compelled the population to do unpaid work, to dig canals and build palaces. As is known from historical records, there were instances when the material for building houses, laying out parks and growing gardens was collected from the population in lieu of taxes.

The intensification of feudal exploitation was compounded with the tyranny of the authorities and financial officials. The mounting tax burden and oppression by officials evoked acute dissatisfaction and, in some instances, violent protest action among the masses. Popular action was spontaneous and often ended with the killing of tax-collectors.

Sometimes, after a mutiny, the authorities would depose some of the officials and reduce taxes, with the very essence of feudal exploitation left unchanged, of course.

Thus, under Sultan Abu Said, decrees were issued, announcing a reduction of a part of the *kharaj* to be paid before harvest gathering and the lifting of taxes on fruit-trees. In response to the popular action of protest against abuses by officials who had misappropriated part of the taxes and increased the poll-tax tenfold in Herat in 1457-1458, Mahmud Mirza, son of Abul Qasim Babur, ordered that the unlawfully collected money be returned to the population. The subsequent years saw new uprisings caused by abuses of power by the fisk officials. During one such uprising Ali Sher Nawai, who was then a vizier, was compelled to announce, on behalf of Sultan Husayn, the lifting of taxes in Herat and the punishment of the officials. Though one must know that such orders were a mere formality.

As before, the anti-feudal thrust of popular action under the Timurids often took the form of religious sectarian movements. Most known at that time was the Hurufi sect[21] which was under the influence of the Ismailites and the Sufis. It had followers in Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Syria and Herat, mostly among the craftsmen and urban intellectuals. They saw the people's liberation from tyranny in an armed uprising led by a *mahdi* who would "feed the Earth with truth and justice". Common property and common meals were introduced in the dervish abode of the Hurufis in Herat. After Ahmad Lur, a member of that sect, wounded Sultan Shahrukh with a knife in Herat's central mosque in 1427* (Ahmad Lur was slashed to death on the spot), the Hurufis were subjected to repression; some were executed.

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* According to the sources, the Hurufis felt hatred for the Timurids since Fazlullah Asterabadi had been exiled by Timur to Shirvan, where he was killed by Timur's son Miran Shah.

Some of the feudal rulers and tribal chiefs began to rise increasingly against the Herat Timurids, especially in the middle of the 15th century. According to historical sources, they not only refused to pay taxes but staged numerous rebellions against the Timurid princes and the rulers of a number of regions. Many were only nominally dependent on the centre, but they sought full independence all the same. Among the recalcitrant vassals of the Timurids the sons of Sultan Husayn (vicegerents of Balkh, Merv and Abivard) and the Arghun dynasty of Mongol descent were most powerful. Members of the Arghun dynasty ruled a vast territory that included Ghur, Seistan, Zabulistan, and the Kabul region, with Qandahar as their capital.

At the close of the 15th century Sultan Husayn's son Zunnun Arghun rose in rebellion. During those same years Muhammad Shaybani, khan of the nomad Uzbeks, seized the domains of the Central Asian Timurids and their capital Samarkand. Having mustered large forces (including the troops of his sons), Sultan Husayn moved his army against Muhammad Shaybani at the start of 1506, but died en route. The strife between the Timurid princes flared up anew. This enabled Muhammad Shaybani to seize Balkh and then, in 1507, Herat.[22] Soon Khorasan was practically conquered. But Muhammad Shaybani's rule was short-lived. In 1510 his troops were routed and he himself was killed near Merv in a battle against Shah Ismail (1502-1524), the founder of the Safavid dynasty that had been established in Iran and contiguous regions.

After lengthy and persistent battles the Safavids conquered Khorasan and the lands on the left bank of the Amu Darya up to Balkh. Khorasan became an outlying province of the Safavid state and its population, which professed Sunnism, was subjected to religious persecution by the Safavids who had proclaimed the Shiite branch of Islam the official religion. Popular action and feudal mutinies in the subsequent years often assumed the form of religious struggle which was waged off and on for several decades with alternating success, Due to this, the Uzbek khans of Mavarannahr, who enjoyed certain support of the population opposed to the Safavid rulers, even managed to temporarily establish their power in Herat (in 1535, 1587 and 1597).

Late in the 16th century Herat was recaptured by the Safavids, and members of the large Kyzylbash tribe Shamlu were for many years the hereditary rulers of that region.

As for the Kabul and Ghazni regions, beginning with the middle of the 15th century they were ruled by Abu Said's son Ulugh Beg (1460-1502). Afghan tribes settled in his domains. After a conflict with Ulugh Beg part of the tribes migrated to the east, some settled in Lagman, and others moved first to Nangarhar and then to the Peshawar Valley and seized the regions of Bajaur and Swat.

Babur, the Roshanite and Khushhal Khan

In 1504, the Ferghana ruler's son, Timurid prince Zahir-ad-din Babur, who later founded the dynasty of the Great Moghuls, captured Kabul. A large part of the lands populated by Afghan tribes came under the rule of that dynasty. In his memoirs *Babur Namah*, a most important source for studying Afghanistan and the Afghans, he relates valuable information about the settlement, way of life, morals and customs of the Afghan tribes and gives a detailed description of a number of towns and regions, paying particular attention to Kabul, which he was very fond of. Babur also wrote *Mubayyin*, a treatise in verse on state administration.[23]

Babur's policy with regard to the Afghan tribes was shaped in accord with his preparations for an expedition to India. Part of the tribes, that would not obey him and refused to pay tribute, he dealt with cruelly; while in the case of other tribes, the Yusufzais, for instance, he succeeded in winning their support and persuaded them to join his army, taking into consideration the fact that the throne in Delhi was occupied by the Lodi dynasty of Afghan descent.

In 1526, after the battle at Panipat, in which Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (1517-1526) was killed, Babur with his troops, which partly consisted of Afghans, seized Delhi and extended his power up to Bengal. He died in India in 1530, but was buried in Kabul, in accordance with his

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wish. His state included part of the territory of present-day Afghanistan, among them Nangarhar, Seistan, and the Kabul, Herat, Ghazni and Qandahar regions.

The Qandahar region, and the city proper, stood on caravan routes, which brought great profit. Besides, being a major strategic point on the route to India, Qandahar was for many years the bone of contention between the Great Moghuls and the Safavids. It changed hands several times in the 16th and the early half of the 17th centuries. In 1649 the city was seized by Savafid Shah Abbas II. The Ghilzai and Abdali tribes that settled in the Qandahar province took part in the long struggle for Qandahar. Their chiefs sided intermittently with the Safavids and with the Great Moghuls. Part of the Abdalis moved to the Herat province, while others, who supported the Great Moghuls, went to India and settled mainly in Multan. The Ghilzais gained a foothold in the regions of Zamindawar and Qandahar.

The chiefs of the Ghilzai, Abdali and other Afghan tribes that settled in the territory of the Safavids were subordinate to the Safavid vicegerents appointed by the shah. To gain the continued loyalty of the tribes and receive military support from the Afghan chiefs, the Safavids often gave them a free hand in tax-collecting, granted them titles, land and money, availing themselves of the discord and struggle between separate tribes or their subdivisions. Thus, under Abbas I (1587-1629) in 1597 Abdali malik Sado of the Popolzai clan received the title of "chief of Afghans" for his cooperation in the struggle for Qandahar. Sado's troops were instructed to safeguard the roads from Herat to Qandahar. The Sado family were granted privileges that were later enjoyed also by their offspring—the Sadozais who, having become the khan-hels, received the right to appoint the chief of all Abdalis.

Taking part in the military expeditions of various rulers and fighting almost incessantly against other tribes and the settled population for cultivated lands and pastures, acting as middlemen and guarding the caravan routes, the Afghans for a long time retained intra-tribal military organisation based on traditional family ties. At the same time, tribe unions were formed mainly for joint struggle against other tribes and local, non-Afghan rulers whose lands the Afghans seized or intended to seize. Within such unions the relations between tribes at that period were based increasingly on vassal dependence, which largely accounted for the erosion of patriarchal and tribal relations. The development of social relations among the Afghan tribes has been thoroughly studied primarily in works by Professor I. M. Reisner and his disciples Professors Yu. V. Gankovsky, L. R. Gordon-Polonskaya, and V. A. Romodin.[24] They stressed in their studies that during the development of seized lands and pastures and settlement in seized territories, the subdivisions of Afghan tribes gradually mixed, while tribal unions tended to become the embryo of territorial-tribal associations set up for the joint struggle against other tribal unions.

For various reasons groups of one and the same tribe often occupied pastures and land oases not on an uninterrupted tract of land but intermittently. The chiefs of some tribes, instead of forming tribal troops set up military units not joined by blood relationship.

Having occupied the lands in particular in the area of the Kabul and Qandahar regions and in the Peshawar Valley, the Afghans divided them among the tribesmen. This division of land was based on various principles: according to the number of people or to the size of the hereditary shares, or depending on the prestige of the heads of the families and their role in the conquest of the lands. A large part of the land area went to the nobility. Ever more often the impoverished members of a tribe, a clan or separate families were compelled to seek the patronage of the stronger ones by the right of the *khamsaya* (dependent), thus bolstering the position of the tribal nobility who were gradually becoming feudal landlords.

The growing property inequality and the natural conditions in the new regions of settlement, where nomad livestock breeding was often out of the question, made separate groups and subdivisions of some tribes switch to a settled way of life. Thus, part of the Ghilzais, Abdalis, Momands, Kakars and Muhammadzais began to cultivate land, grow cereals and rice and sell them, while others, who settled in the cities, for instance in Kabul, Herat or Ghazni, made up a section of the Afghan population there and were occupied with handicrafts and trade. As they began to live a settled life, both groups joined the already established system of feudal relations and feudal economy. While seizing cultivated land oases, the tribal nobility tried not to give the land out to their tribesmen but to appropriate it turning the population into *khamsayas*.

Development in Afghan society of barter and trade, emergence of usury, and consolidation of the right to landownership—first for the Muslim theologians and then for the nobility—eroded patriarchal-tribal relations, with the tribal chiefs and elite turning into a hereditary feudal nobility.

In the process of the feudalisation of the Afghan tribes, the social institutions, that were patriarchal by form (specifically, the *jirga*—council of tribes), gradually changed their social make-up, ensuring the right of the nobility not only to the exploitation of slaves and the *khamsayas*, but also to subjugation and enslavement of the formally free co-tribesmen.

Feudalisation proceeded unevenly among various tribes. In the livestock breeding tribes, the Wazirs, for instance, patriarchal-tribal relations were only beginning to disintegrate in the 16th-18th centuries, while the feudalisation of the Khattaks, Khalils, Muhammadzais and flat-country Momands, i.e., those who had begun a settled life, was going on much faster. The concentration of land in the hands of the elite of those tribes was a more intensive process.

An important aspect of feudalisation in Afghan society was that the development of the productive forces, the social division of labour and the shaping of antagonistic classes, while undermining the traditional forms of collective landownership, led to the formation not only of feudal landownership but also of private landownership by the peasants.

Karl Marx wrote on that score that "the more the tribe moves away from its original place of settlement and occupies *alien* land, thus entering substantially new conditions of labour and the energies of the individual further developing—hence the communal character seems, and must seem, rather as a negative unity in relation to the outside world—the more do conditions arise which cause the individual to become a *private proprietor* of land—of a particular plot—whose separate cultivation devolves on him and his family."[25]

The struggle between the peasants and the tribal elite, which was becoming ever more feudal for retaining that property during the disintegration of the patriarchal-tribal relations played an important role in the development of Afghan society.

Most outstanding Muslim theologians were the first in Afghan society to secure for themselves the right to keep their land holdings out of the sphere of re-allotment (*vesh*), which in some instances was practised annually. Many of the impoverished tribesmen were seeking the patronage of influential Muslim theologians, turning their land plots over to them and thus becoming *khamsayas*.

As they became big landlords, the Muslim theologians often exploited not only the *khamsayas* but also other believers. This explains why the anti-feudal movement, begun in the 16th century in the eastern regions populated by Afghans, against the tribal elite which was getting feudal and against the power of the Great Moghuls, was also spearheaded against orthodox Islam and its preachers.

Like many other anti-feudal movements in the Middle Ages, that movement, too, had originated and spread as a sectarian one. Its leader and ideologist was Bayazid Ansari.[26] Born in Punjab, he moved together with his family to Kaniguram (Waziristan), the homeland of his father. Travelling with caravans across the Afghan lands, Central Asia and India, he studied various branches of Islam and Hinduism. In the middle of the 16th century Bayazid Ansari declared himself a prophet, the elder of the world (*pir-i roushan*) and began to preach a new teaching. His main postulates were that there was no distance between God and man, that the divine was omnipresent throughout the world and that all people, whatever their nationality, religion, property status or hereditary privileges, were equal before God. Believing in the migration of souls, he preached that "the path to salvation" was the same for slaves, *khamsayas*, Afghans and non-Afghans, and that salvation could be achieved in the struggle for equality in earthly life. Ansari was opposed to the payment of a *kalym* for the bride.

According to him, all people were subdivided into those who rejected and those who accepted his doctrine (the "people of the light"–the Roshanites). Those who rejected his doctrine, his adversaries, were declared, from time to time, to be non-existent, having no right to own land and other property, and were often annihilated. Their property was confiscated to be distributed among the sect members. The Roshanites proposed that the division of Afghan society into families and tribes should be abandoned in favour of a unification of people that was to be based on the territorial principle. Ansari set forth the essence of his doctrine in verse and prose. Best known among his writings is *Khay ul-Bayan* (Good Word), written as Bayazid's dialogue with God. Bayazid Ansari was not only an eloquent speaker and a superb poet, but also a gifted political leader and military commander of the 1560s. From preaching he went over to organising an uprising. By its slogans and composition the Roshani movement en masse was a peasant movement spearheaded against the tribal nobility (becoming feudal lords) and the Muslim theologians. Because the movement was clearly anti-Moghul, the insurgents were joined by individual members of the nobility and tribal chiefs dissatisfied with the power of the Great Moghuls.

Encompassing mainly areas north-west of what is today Pakistan (with the centre of the movement in Tirakh), the Roshanites achieved, in the long years of their resolute struggle, significant military victories in the territory of Afghanistan too. They captured temporarily the areas of Nangarhar, as well as Ghazni, Kabul and contiguous regions, and blocked the Khyber Pass, thereby disrupting not only traditional trade routes, but also the military communications of the Moghul rulers.

In the lands seized by the Roshanites the conditions of the *khamsayas* and of ordinary tribesmen improved and slaves were set free. The lands and property of the nobility, Muslim theologians and Moghul rulers were to be divided between the sect members, and one-sixth of the spoils went to the sect leaders. In case of resistance, prisoners were often executed.

Most active in the movement were the Khalils, Muhammadzais, flat-country Momands, and Hughianis, among whom social contradictions reached a high point, while the ordinary members were subjected to double exploitation, by the tribal nobility and the Moghul vicegerents. The Roshanites were backed up by other tribes, sometimes together with their chiefs. The chiefs joined the movement for various reasons. Some planned to avail themselves of the situation and seize more fertile lands and pastures, others in order to fight against the Moghul rulers who were taking away part of their gains.

The Great Moghuls took vigorous efforts to quell the Roshanite movement and sent major military expeditions to fight them. The class character of the movement and its anti-Moghul thrust were not the only reasons why the Roshanites were so violently opposed. The areas captured by them in the north-west of the lands of the Great Moghuls were important for the latter economically ,and strategically, for through them ran the main routes linking India with Iran and Central Asia.

However, for more than half a century the Great Moghuls failed to suppress the Roshanites. The movement was led first by Bayazid Ansari himself and then by his sons and grandsons. It was not before the late 1580s that the Great Moghuls, having won over the nobility of some tribes and pooled their own efforts, dealt a series of heavy defeats at the Roshanites, after which the movement lost its force. Bayazid Ansari's grandson Karimdad, the last of the movement leaders, was killed in 1638.

In the course of the movement it was now joined by some tribes, and then left by them. This inconsistency was not so much due to the fact that the nobility, which sought land grants, high titles and privileges, compacted with the Great Moghuls. Some of the tribes themselves, as, for instance, the Yusufzais, opposed the equalisation of rights of free tribesmen with those of the slaves and *khamsayas*, since this left no chance for exploiting the latter two. In addition, one should take into account different levels of social development, economic and political disconnection, and traditional tribal strife.

Despite the defeat, the Roshanite movement had an enormous influence on the historical development of the Afghan tribes. It was an outstanding period in the struggle of the popular masses against feudal exploitation and foreign rule. What is more, the movement of the Roshanites and their striving to unite the population on a territorial basis at a time when patriarchal-tribal relations were fracturing, was a progressive factor which undoubtedly influenced the development of Afghan society.

The unification ideas were taken up in a new Afghan uprising led in the 1660s by Khushhal Khan (1613-1689), the ruler of the Khattaks.[27]

The Khattak principality with its centre in Akora, situated on the roads leading to Peshawar, at the confluence of the Kabul and Landai rivers, was formed in the 16th century as a domain dependent on the Great Moghuls.

The Khattak nobility, who prevented their tribesmen from taking an active part in the Roshanite movement, sided with the Great Moghuls and for many years were at loggerheads with the Yusufzai chiefs. Padishah Akbar (1556-1605) granted the Khattak chiefs a number of privileges (the right to rule Akora as a *jagir*, a conventional land grant) and obliged them to guard the caravans, the military units of the Great Moghuls and their transport from attacks by other tribes on the roads to Peshawar. Although power in Akora was practically hereditary, the Moghul padishahs by special edicts asserted the authority of the Khattak rulers, giving them all sorts of incentives from time to time. Thus, Shahbaz Khan, the father of Khushhal Khan, was granted the right to collect taxes from the Yusufzai lands in the Peshawar Valley (amounting to 12,000 rupees annually) for his successful struggle against a rebellious vicegerent and the Yusufzais. After the death of Shahbaz Khan in 1641 Moghul padishah Shah Jahan approved the appointment of the former's son Khushhal Khan as ruler of the Khattaks. For taking part in the expeditions of Moghul troops to Balkh, Badakhshan, Deccan and other places, Khushhal Khan received a large land grant with the *jagir* status, which brought him 150,000 rupees annually. In return, he had to supply 1,500 warriors to the Moghuls. A vassal of the Moghul padishahs, Khushhal Khan also had Khattak maliks and khans subordinate to him.

During Khushhal Khan's rule many of the Khattaks began to live a settled life. By that time stratification of the Khattaks on the basis of property ownerships and feudalisation attained higher levels than among many other tribes. The Khattaks cultivated the land, were skilled in handicrafts, worked salt-mines, selling the salt outside the principality. By order of Khushhal Khan a cadastral survey was carried out in the principality. Arable lands and also wastelands, granted additionally for cultivation, were measured and land plots fixed in accordance with the number of people in a family. All these data were entered into a special register. Thus, to regulate tax exploitation Khushhal Khan carried out a cadastral survey and attached the Khattak tribesmen to definite plots of land that were no longer liable to redivision, as was periodically practised before.

Though the main forces of the Roshanites were suppressed, riots among the Afghan tribes continued into the 1640s and 1650s. The disturbances intensified in response to the offensive policy of the Great Moghuls and their military expeditions to the north-west provinces of their empire (the region of Peshawar and the roads from Peshawar towards Kabul, where the Afridis, Yusufzais, Momands, Shinwaris, Safis and other Afghan tribes had settled). The riots, with the epicentre in the Afridi territory, grew into an uprising. The troops of the Great Moghuls raided Afghan settlements, committed outrages, pillages, and burned down houses.

At first Khushhal Khan was not very active in the operations conducted by the tribes. But, suspected by the Great Moghuls of supporting the insurgents, he was seized and held in a fortress from 1664 to 1668, after which he was under house arrest.

On returning to his native land Khushhal Khan led an uprising against Moghul domination. A fearless soldier, Khushhal Khan had great oratory and poetic gifts. In his speeches and verses he called for the unity of the Afghans and urged them to end tribal discord and internal strife and join in the struggle against the Great Moghuls. During the insurrection he was joined by the tribes that populated the area from Peshawar to Qandahar. According to some data, by 1675 his supporters numbered nearly 300,000. But the persistent and bloody struggle of the Afghans was suppressed.

Moghul padishah Aurangzeb had to fight against the Afghan tribes for almost two years. By destroying crops, exterminating the population and kindling intertribal enmity the Great Moghuls intended to subdue the Afghans and to induce their chiefs to treachery. The sources cite numerous facts of chiefs being bribed and intrigues by the Moghul rulers. For instance, the governor of Kabul sent letters to the tribal nobility on behalf of an Afghan chief, saying that the Afridi chiefs were not going to divide the conquered lands and intended to leave them for themselves. All that, naturally, caused tensions, and then a split, among the tribes. Khushhal Khan's son Ashraf, who led the movement, was seized in 1683 and taken to Bijapur. His successor Afzal recognised himself as a vassal of the Great Moghuls. But even after the uprising was suppressed, the power of Moghul padishahs was only nominal in many regions populated by Afghans.

The anti-Moghul uprisings of the Afghans were followed by the struggle of the tribes living in the Safavid state.

The Qandahar and Herat Principalities

At the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century the Safavid state, which included Herat and Qandahar, was in the grip of a severe economic and political crisis. A. Volynsky, the Russian Ambassador to Iran from 1715 to 1718, wrote: "During his stay [in Iran] Alexander the Great could not have sacked the country as much, and I expect that this crown is facing complete ruin."[28]

One of the most important causes of such decline was the ruin of small peasant farming—the economic basis of the feudal Safavid state.[29] After the 1698-1701 census, the duties and part of the rent, paid in money, were increased and a new taxation system was introduced. With the growth of the proportion of taxes paid to the treasury and the end to the wars of aggression that had brought abundant spoils, the feudal lords' profits shrank drastically. To increase them, they taxed the population more rigorously. Feudal exploitation increased many times over. The ruin of peasants caused the decline of agriculture, which left craftsmen without raw materials and merchants without goods. Many peasants left their homes. The lands, including those in the shah's domain, were left untilled. Officials in the capital were instructed to populate those lands with peasants who had little land or no land at all.[30] The arbitrary rule and embezzlement by officials, court intrigues and corruption made the situation even worse.

A tide of discontent and indignation swept the country. Many chiefs of nomad tribes came out against the shah. For the Safavids this meant not only the contraction of their social base but also the loss of military backing from the tribes.

The peoples whose lands were forcefully incorporated into the Safavid state fought most vigorously against the central government. The liberation movement of the subjugated peoples had two main trends in it: one included the broad masses—the peasants, the rural settled and nomad tax-paying population (rayats and ilyats), and the townspeople (handicraftsmen and small traders); the other included the local feudal lords dissatisfied with the infringement on their political power and the worsening of their economic situation. In those protest actions the striving for freedom from foreign domination was closely intertwined with the separatist tendencies of the feudal lords who exploited the discontent of the popular masses.

The population of Qandahar, a busy trade centre and a strategic military point, was among the first to rebel. At that time the Qandahar province was populated by Afghan tribes, mostly the Ghilzais, Abdalis, and also the Kakars, Tarins, Baburis, and Nasyrs. There were Afghans (mainly Ghilzais of the Hotaki clan) in Qandahar proper.

In each tribe the disintegration of tribal relations and the shaping of feudal ones proceeded in a somewhat different direction. The Abdalis and Ghilzais had reached a higher level of social and economic development. In the Ghilzai tribes the tribal elite was most feudalised among the Hotakis who made up a large part of the Afghan population in the Qandahar province. The Hotaki group included the Khan family of the entire Ghilzai tribe (Shah-alam-hel), which doubtlessly facilitated the growth of Hotakis' political influence on the other Ghilzai tribes.

The Afghan tribes in the Safavid state were harshly repressed in the late 17th and early 18th century. In the 1698-1704 period alone taxes were increased twice in the Qandahar province. The Safavid rulers plundered the entire population. The economic condition of the tribes was much deteriorated by the drastic reduction of transit trade, which had previously been a source of large incomes for them. The reduction was caused by the transfer of trade with Indian Ocean countries to Dutch and British merchants, by the development of sea routes from Europe to India, by the closure of the Indo-Persian border, constant uprisings of the Sikhs in the Punjab, and so on.[31]

Apart from tax oppression, the Afghan tribes were subjected to national discrimination and religious persecution. The latter was caused by the increased role of Shiite theologians in the Safavid state (the Afghans were Sunnites). The persecution of Sunnites grew especially large-scale under shah Sultan Husayn (1694-1722) who, being under the influence of Shiite *mujtaheeds*,* persecuted Sunnites, Sufi dervishes and members of various sects, specifically those populating the outlying provinces of the Safavid state (including those in Afghanistan) who propounded separatist tendencies.

The popular unrest in the Qandahar province in the early years of shah Husayn's rule was an response to the increased burden of the taxes and the arbitrary rule by the shah's officials. This evoked great apprehension in the shah's court. In 1704 Gurgen Khan, known for his cruelty, was appointed the *beglerbeg* (ruler) of Qandahar. But his policy of terror, of exploiting discord between individual Afghan tribes, also between the Ghilzais and Abdalis, only added to the dissatisfaction of the people. The malcontents were led by Hotaki chief Mir Wais, the *qalantar* of Qandahar.

Mir Wais went to Isfahan to lodge a complaint against Gurgen Khan. On his arrival he saw that the shah's power was weak and realised that by bringing together the malcontents he could fight not only against Gurgen Khan but even attempt to liberate Qandahar from the Safavids. After that Mir Wais went on a pilgrimage to Mecca where he received the blessing of Sunnite theologians for a struggle against the "heretical king", the Shiite shah Husayn.

Back in Qandahar in 1708, Mir Wais summoned a *jirga*, a council of tribe representatives, which was attended by the chiefs and members of the nobility of the tribes of the Nasyrs, Baburis, Tarins, Kakars, Alkozais and Baluchis. A decision was made to start an uprising.[32] In April 1709 Mir Wais led an uprising in Qandahar during which the

* *Mujtaheed* (Arabic, "one who has achieved", meaning one who has achieved a high degree of religious knowledge), a member of the elite of Shiite theologians well versed in Muslim law.

Safavid ruler was killed and his troops defeated. Qandahar became the centre of an independent domain ruled by Mir Wais. The emergence of the new domain marked a new stage in the complex evolution of the Afghan state.

All strata of the population took part in the 1709 uprising. The nobility of the tribes, ilyats and townspeople had one common goal—liberation from Safavid domination. After futile attempts by the Safavids to regain Qandahar in a peaceful way, they sent two military expeditions against Mir Wais, in 1710 -1711 and in 1713, which ended in the utter defeat of the shah's troops. In their struggle against the Safavid forces the Afghans were greatly supported by the Baluchis, nomad tribes that inhabited the Qandahar plain.

The economic and internal political situation in the Safavid state was going from bad to worse. Peasants fled their homes, leaving the fields untilled. In 1710 shah Sultan Husayn issued a firman (decree) on attaching the peasants (rayats) to places of tax payment. It may be concluded on the basis of narrative sources that at that time the nomad population (ilyats) had no right to change without permission the places of residence or a territory where it roamed.[33] The Safavids' decrees and their predatory policy (particularly in the conquered areas) sparked off new risings against their rule.

The insurrection in Qandahar and the formation of the Qandahar (or Ghilzai, as it was otherwise called) principality were followed by uprisings in the northern Caucasus led by Surhay Khan of Kazikumuh, and disturbances in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Kurdistan.

The Afghan tribes (mainly the Abdalis) populating the Herat region revolted in 1716.[34] Those tribes were in ferment soon after the assassination of Gurgen Khan by whose order thousands of Afghan families had been resettled from Qandahar to Herat in the early 18th century, while many chiefs, including the grandfather and uncles of Ahmad Khan Abdali (the future founder of the independent Afghan state) had been murdered.

The tribal chiefs summoned Abdullah Khan Sadozai and his son Asadullah, who were at the time in Multan, to Herat. On their way they were seized by Safavid military commander Khusraw Mirza, but soon escaped to Herat where they began preparations for an uprising. Having learnt of this, Abbas Quli Khan Shamlu, the Safavid ruler of Herat, arrested them. But the disturbances in the city, which involved also non-Afghans, frightened the Safavids. It was therefore decided at a shah's durbar that Abbas Quli Khan Shamlu should be recalled from Herat and a new ruler, Jafar Khan Ustajlu, be appointed instead.

Meanwhile Abdullah Khan Sadozai again escaped from prison and took refuge in the Dushah Mountains. He was joined gradually by thousands of his supporters. The insurgents occupied Isfizar, after which they moved on to Herat and laid siege to it. With wide support from the city's population the insurgents took Herat. Their power soon spread to Badghis, Kusuviye, Ghurian and later to Farah, which had earlier been seized by the Ghilzais.

The loss of all these regions, of which Herat was most important, was a heavy blow to the Safavids. A. Volynsky noted at the time that bread and livestock were supplied to the Safavid residency in Isfahan and other places mostly from the Herat region. "However," he wrote, "during my presence there the Persians lost it, for it was conquered by the Afghans, and that causes the Persians to start a war...."[35] But the Safavids proved unable to suppress the uprising, and there emerged the independent principality of Herat.

The political situation in the Safavid state was growing ever more tense: in 1717-1719 the liberation movement of Daghestan tribes was on the upswing and the Lurs and Baluchis rose up in arms. The Arabs of Masqat, who seized Bahrain, operated along the Persian Gulf coastline.

But what worried the Safavids more than anything else was the uprising of the Afghans who, having gained ground in Herat, began to threaten Meshhed. The second, and the last, attempt to suppress the insurgents also failed.

For all the differences among the Afghan tribes, including those between the Ghilzais and Abdalis, the Ghilzais grew stronger militarily. The tribe's nobility with Mir Wais's son Mir Mahmud at the head undertook an expedition to Iran.[36] The ruler of Qandahar, which remained the centre of the Ghilzai principality, was his brother Husayn.

In 1722 the Safavid capital Isfahan was captured by Mir Mahmud after an eight-month siege. After that, Kerman, Fars and Persian Iraq were conquered.

At that time various clans of the Abdali tribe struggled for power in Herat. Ultimately the struggle was won by Allahyar Khan who became the Abdali chief.

The differences between the Ghilzais and the Abdalis became increasingly acute and often grew into armed clashes, which played a large role during their struggle against Nadir Quli Beg (since 1736 Nadir Shah Afshar).

Nadir Quli Beg, the leader of a feudal group in Khorasan, joined the detachments of Tahmasp, the son of shah Sultan Husayn, in 1726 and placed him under his influence. Having united the Khorasan tribes, Nadir Quli Beg captured Khorasan, Mazenderan and Astrabad and began mustering forces to fight the Ghilzais, who had occupied Isfahàn, and the Turks, who had seized some of the western regions of the Safavid state. But before moving his troops against the Ghilzais Nadir had to capture Herat and thus secure a safe rear flank for himself.

Putting large stakes on the expedition to Herat, Nadir told S. Avramov, a Russian representative in Iran: "We have come out against fifty thousand Afghan Abdalis and ... if we are defeated, that will be the end to the Persian state...."[37]

Having learnt about Nadir's intention to subdue Herat, the Afghan Abdalis started intensive preparations for its defence. They built fortifications, stocked up with food and fodder, and formed armed units. According to an eyewitness, the population of many towns and villages in the region joined the insurgents.

In May 1729 Nadir set out from Meshhed to Herat with an army of 20,000 men and artillery. The insurgents, led by Allahyar Khan, went to meet the enemy, having sent units of horsemen who were to by-pass Nadir's troops from the rear. Nadir moved very cautiously. A few farsahs from the Kafir-Qala fortress, where the insurgents stood, the first battle was fought till dark. Nadir was wounded and his troops incurred heavy losses. In the second battle the Afghans had been winning, too, but were forced to retreat to Ghurian when reinforcements had come to back up Nadir. As the news reached the Abdali chiefs, they summoned Zulfiqar Khan and his troops from Farah to Herat. In the battle which took place soon after that and involved great bloodshed, the insurgents suffered a defeat, in spite of their desperate resistance.

Nadir's troops plundered Farah and captured the families of the Abdali chiefs, including those of Zulfiqar Khan and Allahyar Khan. This development hastened the chiefs to conclude peace. Nadir, too, wanted peace, for he was aware of a Ghilzai expedition to Khorasan. He therefore had to set out for Meshhed immediately. A peace agreement was concluded in June 1729, according to which the Abdali tribe was to release the prisoners and pay tributes. Allahyar Khan remained the emir, but now as Nadir's vicegerent. On the Afghans' insistence Nadir and his troops did not enter Herat, neither did he leave a garrison in the region. His compliance was due to the fact that, wishing to secure a rear to fight the Ghilzais and Turks, Nadir did not want to aggravate relations with the Abdalis.

By the beginning of 1730 Nadir routed the Ghilzais and captured Isfahan. Mir Mahmud's brother Ashraf Hotaki, who led the troops, was killed. After that Nadir inflicted heavy defeats on the Turks.

In 1731 the Herat province was again in a state of ferment. Ruined under the Safavids by taxes and exhausted by a struggle which had lasted almost 15 years, the popular masses refused to pay the requisitions fixed by the terms of peace with Nadir. The chiefs of the Abdali tribe, deprived of independence and being forced not only to obey Nadir's orders but to share their profits with him, were preparing for an uprising. They were promised support from Husayn, the ruler of the Qandahar principality (1722-1738) who had been frightened by the military successes of Nadir and feared that he would attack Qandahar.

Allahyar Khan's attempts to maintain peace in the region proved futile. The indignant population dethroned him and banished him from Herat. The power went over to Zulfiqar Khan who declared Herat an independent city. The insurgents then advanced towards Meshhed in an attempt to take control of the whole of Khorasan.

The garrison troops with Ibrahim Khan Afshar at the head were defeated in a battle at Meshhed and took up positions in the fortress. Zulfiqar besieged the city, but upon learning about the coming of Nadir, had to retreat to Herat. Early in May 1731 Nadir's troops approached

Herat and pitched a camp on the right bank of the Harirud at Juyi Nukra.

Meanwhile preparations were underway in Herat to beat back an enemy attack. The population of the city and its suburbs were busy building fortifications and forming armed detachments. Messengers were sent to Qandahar with a request for reinforcements.

The insurgents made sallies day and night, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy and keeping it in constant suspense. During one such sally Nadir was nearly taken prisoner. On another occasion, when the Herat defenders were shooting at the enemy camp, his tent was pierced by a cannon-ball. Infuriated by the stubbornness of the city defenders, Nadir made up his mind to encircle the city, leaving it no chance to receive reinforcements. To that end, he ordered his men to block the road to Qandahar and to sack Farah. In June Herat was blockaded. The city began to suffer from a shortage of food and salt. The plight of the besieged was getting worse with every passing day.

At that point the population of Badghis lent a helping hand, bringing food to Jebrail, from where the Heratans were to take it to the besieged city themselves. The first unit of 1,000 men left Herat secretly and reached Jebrail. The insurgents marched through mountain paths and ravines of the Paropamisus on their way back and brought the food safely to Herat. As soon as he learned of this, Nadir attacked Jebrail and, after long and stubborn battles, captured it. New ways were to be sought to bring food to Herat.

In late autumn 1731, a 2,000-man unit of insurgents left the city and, having passed through the Paropamisus, entered Obah, whose population provided the insurgents with food, after which they returned to Herat.

These events evoked an enthusiastic response among the population in the area. Derwish Ali Khan with numerous supporters from among the local population marched on Herat. Nadir, warned about his approach, sent his troops under the command of Delawar Khan against him. The forces of Derwish Ali Khan were routed and he himself was taken prisoner and executed.

The siege of Herat was taking too much time and, having lost all hope of taking the fortress with his own forces, Nadir ordered the Khorasan ruler to send a reinforcement.

Meanwhile the food reserves from Obah had come to an end and the insurgents had to start negotiations. The arrival of a 10,000-man unit from Khorasan to support Nadir and the new fortifications built at the city gate left them no chance of receiving any help from the outside. Hunger began to spread through Herat.

In March 1732, at the decision of a durbar (nobility council) the besieged, promised by Nadir that their lives and the city would be spared, opened the fortress gates. Nadir entered Herat. He appointed Muhammad Khan Mervi, a member of the Khorasan nobility close to him, the ruler of the city. The durbar was replaced with a council whose members were to be picked out by Nadir. Several thousand Abdali families were deported. To prevent new uprisings in Herat, the tribe was broken up and resettled, the durbar was abolished and another ruler was appointed. At the same time, units of the Abdali cavalry were included in Nadir's army and actively participated in his expeditions.

In 1736 Nadir was proclaimed the shah of Iran at a meeting of the nobility in the Mugan Steppe. Beginning with late 1736 his troops made repeated attacks on Qandahar. Nadir feared that the Qandahar Afghans would pose a perpetual threat to him. Besides, the seizure of Qandahar was to be the first step in the preparations for an expedition to India. But despite his undeniable military superiority, Nadir could not enter Qandahar for more than a year. The long siege compelled him to build a whole town on the site of his military camp. The sources relate numerous facts about the heroic resistance of the Qandahar people. Their sorties were causing serious losses to the enemy. By December 1737 only a few thousands remained of the army which Nadir had led to Qandahar. A new levy of recruits was called almost in every part of the Iranian state. But it was not before May 23, 1738 that Nadir captured the city.*

Nadir laid waste to the city and carried out several measures to weaken the economic power and political influence of the Ghilzais, kindle strife between them and other Afghan tribes and to preclude any possibility of new uprisings. The Hotakis and some other Ghilzai clans were resettled to various regions of Khorasan and the Mugan Steppe, their lands were declared the property of the state and given out as *jagirs* to Abdali khans. At the same time, a cadastral survey of lands requiring irrigation was made in the Qandahar province at Nadir's orders and taxes were fixed. Abdali khans were appointed the rulers of the province and a number of its regions. It must be noted that the Abdali tribal elite occupied prominent places in Nadir's army. They were paid higher salaries and were granted land. In contrast with the nobility of most of the other tribes, they were neither executed nor fined, though executions and fines became particularly frequent in Nadir Shah's last years of life.

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* The fall of Qandahar was largely due to the treason of Husayn, the ruler of the principality who had entered into secret talks with Nadir Shah and, in fact, helped his troops to seize the city. (For more details see Yu. V. Gankovsky, "From the History of the Siege of Qandahar by Nadir Shah Afshar in 1737-1738", *Brief Reports of the Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences*, Issue 37, Moscow, 1960, pp. 27-33, in Russian.)

The uprisings in Herat and Qandahar spread over into nearly all regions populated by Afghans. The struggle did not abate even after the cities were occupied by Nadir. When Nadir was still in Qandahar, an uprising of Afghan tribes started in the Ghazni region. In Kabul various sections of the population—the nobility, Muslim theologians, and ordinary ilyats—united against Nadir. Though artillery made Nadir's troops superior in weapons, they came up against fierce resistance at Kabul.

The Afghan tribes living in the mountains between Kabul and Jalalabad also rose against Nadir. Twelve thousand of the shah's elite troops under the command of Aslan Khan Qirklu were sent against those tribes, which had long been known for their militancy. The shah's troops were defeated. The Afghans utilised every opportunity to offer resistance to Nadir. Some of them, who had fled from persecution, joined the army of the Great Moghul Muhammad Shah in 1738 and then fought under his command at Delhi in 1739.

Nadir's mounting strength and his military victories, including the seizure of Delhi, did not discourage the Afghans who carried on the liberation struggle. A bit more than a year after the fall of Qandahar, new disturbances began in the city.

Nadir sent there Tahmasp Khan Jalair, one of his best military commanders, in the capacity of the ruler of Afghanistan and the north-western regions of the Punjab, which had been added to Nadir's empire. In the 1740s riots flared up anew in several regions, including the Qandahar and Kabul provinces. Taqi Khan, the ruler of Kabul, supported the insurgents and declared his insubordination to the shah. The insurgents established links with other tribes also fighting against Nadir. The shah's soldiers often came over to their side. The example of the people of Qandahar and Kabul was followed by the Hazaras who, having joined hands with the Herat population, rebelled against the Iranian authorities. The Yusufzais rose too. The liberation struggle of the Afghan and other subjugated peoples was combined with protest actions against the mounting tax burden. That was the reason why a powerful wave of uprisings rolled across the country after the introduction of new taxes in 1743.* Taking part in the uprising were various sections of society, with the tax-paying population, the working masses, being most active.

The founding of the independent principalities of Qandahar and Herat and the subsequent actions of the Afghans were not merely isolated incidents. The Afghans were the first to raise the banner of struggle against Safavid domination. That liberation struggle, which started in the late 17th century and lasted, with short intervals, for nearly half a century, promoted the development of a fierce struggle against the Safavids and Nadir Shah. The risings of the Afghans and other peoples in the territory of present-day Afghanistan, together with the liberation movements in Daghestan, Georgia and Central Asia, were one of the main causes of the collapse of the shah's empire. Major elements in the Afghan tribes' stubborn long-time resistance to foreign rule, the uprisings in the first half of the 18th century speeded up "the entire formation of the Afghan state, a process prepared by the course of the evolution of Afghan society".[38]

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* On taxes and taxation policy in the state of Nadir Shah Afshar see M. R. Arunova, "Nadir Shah's Firman", *Sovetskoye vostokovedenie*, No. 2, 1958, pp. 114-120 (in Russian).

CHAPTER THREE

AFGHANISTAN IN MODERN TIMES

The State of Durrani

The Durrani state was not the first state formation among the Afghans (Pashtuns). In the 16th century two feudal principalities–Akora and Teri–had emerged in the territory populated by an East Afghan tribe–the Khattaks. In the 17th century a small feudal principality was formed by the Afridis, another East Afghan tribe. But those first Afghan (Pashtun) feudal principalities occupied a very small area and did not become the nucleus of a state that could unite within its borders all lands populated by Pashtuns. Nor did the two Afghan feudal principalities that emerged at the beginning of the 18th century–Qandahar and Herat, although they did play an important role in the history of the Afghan people. The state of Durrani (1747-1819) was the first to unite all the lands populated by Pashtuns into one independent state.

The desire for uniting all Afghans into one independent state first originated in the 16th-17th centuries, in the crucible of the wars against foreign oppressors. The sons of Bayazid Ansari, who fought for a long time against the Great Moghuls, called themselves "the padishahs of the Afghans". It was not until the mid-18th century that the conditions were ripe for the formation of an independent Afghan state. By that time the development of feudal relations in the main Afghan (Pashtun) tribes provided internal conditions for unification. A major factor that speeded up that process was the need to fight the external enemies–the Iranian and Moghul feudal lords who for centuries oppressed the Afghan people. In the mid-18th century, the disintegration of the Iranian state, the collapse of the empire of the Great Moghuls, and the feudal mutinies in Central Asia offered favourable international conditions for uniting the Afghan lands into one state and extending the power of Afghan feudal lords to the vast territories of the countries bordering on Afghanistan.

The creation of an independent state was in the interests of the feudal upper crust of Afghan society—the khans of the tribes and the Muslim theological elite.[1] It gave them a means for suppressing the exploited lower strata of the population. Furthermore, they no longer had to share their surplus product with Moghul and Iranian feudal lords, under whose power the Afghan lands had been before. Besides, the feudal elite was now able to conduct expeditions of conquest against neighbouring countries.

The formation of the independent Afghan state was also supported by the members of free Pashtun communities—the livestock breeders and farmers who for many years had fought against foreign enslavers—the Iranian and Moghul feudal lords. The khans of the Afghan tribes and the Muslim theological elite were compelled, especially at the initial stage, to reckon with the survivals of the tribal system in Afghan society, and could not immediately begin to exploit their tribesmen in an open and direct way. Therefore the emergence of the independent new state had a favourable effect on the position of the rank-and-file community members, all the more so since part of the immense war spoils brought to the country by Ahmad Shah (1747-1773), the founder of the Durrani state, came their way. In the territories which formed the eastern part of the empire of Nadir Shah Afshar (the nucleus of the Durrani state) the emergence of the state put an end to feudal anarchy and inter-tribal clashes which in the last years of Nadir's rule had a pernicious effect on the people's living conditions. The establishment of a modicum of order and security in the vilayets (provinces) was in the interest of their population—farmers, livestock breeders, craftsmen and small traders.

Thus, the formation of the independent Afghan state under Ahmad Shah was welcomed not only by the ordinary members of the Afghan community but also by part of the non-Afghan population in the central provinces that yearned for the end of feudal anarchy. This was one of the causes of the relative soundness of the state, which did not fall into pieces right after the death of its founder.

After the death of Nadir Shah Afshar, who was assassinated in a coup on June 20, 1747, his vast empire collapsed[2] and its separate parts became independent states. The Afghan units of Nadir's army, which were commanded by several khans of the Abdali tribe, captured a number of artillery pieces from the Iranian army and part of the shah's treasury, and left Khorasan, where they were stationed, for Qandahar. In Qandahar a *jirga* of the most influential and powerful khans from all the main clans of the Abdali tribe was convened near mazar Shir-Surh in October 1747. After several sessions they elected the shah—Ahmad Khan, a young military commander from the Sadozai clan.

Among the Abdalis the khan family of the Sadozais enjoyed a number of privileges: its members could not be executed for a crime and the law of vendetta did not apply to them. However, apart from his origin, there were some other reasons for choosing Ahmad Khan as the head of the Afghan state. One of them was that the Sadozais were not numerous, and the khans of the Abdali tribe believed that a shah elected from the Sadozais did not have "powerful enough support to suppress the autocracy of major tribal khans".[3] No mean role was played also by the backing rendered to Ahmad Khan by Sabir Shah, an outstanding Muslim theologian and a leader of the large Sufi order of the Chishtiye (the Sadozais had long-standing ties with it). Sabir Shah had suggested Ahmad Khan for the post and himself crowned him. His personal prestige was also significant. Though he was a young man (in 1747 Ahmad Khan was not older than 25), he made his way up by taking part in a number of military campaigns during which he commanded Afghan mounted units in the army of the Iranian conqueror.

Since the khans of the Abdali tribe had fathered the Afghan state, they occupied a leading position in it. For the same reason the Abdali tribe was renamed Durrani (the pearly). Furthermore, the key posts in the state apparatus, the army and the court of Afghan shahs were granted to, and made hereditary for the khans of the major Durrani clans and families.* Ahmad Shah even refused the title of

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* For example, the post of the vizier, the head of state, or the next man after the shah, was hereditary for the khans of the Bamizai clan; the post of ishik agasi (Chief Master of Ceremonies) for the khans of the Popolzai clan; the post of mirakhurbashi (the Great Equerry), for the khans of the Ishaqzai clan; and the post of tupchi bashi (the artillery commander), for the Barakzai khans. Therefore the shah had little choice in appointing people to the key posts in the state. An infringement on the privileges of these khan families by the shah and giving their posts to persons outside those families, always caused great complications.

"durr-i dauran" (the pearl of the epoch) offered to him by Derwish Sabir Shah and, instead, chose the title of "durr-i durran", i.e., "the pearl of pearls".

Ahmad Shah, relying on the Afghan mounted units, well seasoned in expeditions, first built up his power in the Qandahar vilayet and then subdued Qalat-i Ghilzai, Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar.[4] After that the khans of the East Afghan tribes recognised him as shah.

Qandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Peshawar and Herat (it took almost the whole of 1750 to conquer the latter) constituted the territorial nucleus of the Durrani state. From there Ahmad Shah later on spread his power and influence to the neighbouring areas of North-Western India, Eastern Iran and Southern Turkestan.

Due to the specific features of the socio-economic development of Afghan society in the Durrani epoch, the state formed by Ahmad Shah was a state of conquerors. In the first half century of its existence the Durrani Shahs made a large number of expeditions, at least 18 to North-Western India alone. Eastern Iran and Southern Turkestan were also the objects of Afghan invasion on several occasions.

As was already noted above, the Afghan khans were not strong enough economically, militarily and politically, even after the Durrani state was formed, to begin direct and open expropriation and exploitation of their tribesmen. In order to weaken and gloss over the growing class contradictions and to prevent an outburst of discontent among ordinary members of the communities, they sought to draw them into wars of conquest, which could bring rich gains. Victorious military campaigns were used by the Afghan feudal nobility as a means of their own rapid enrichment and weakening the growing social contradictions in Afghan society. The conquests also provided the Afghan khans with an opportunity to use the military strength of the tribes for their own benefit. Since part of the immense military spoils also went to the rank-and-file, thousands of free members of the communities readily joined the expeditions, especially when they promised easy success.

In the north-west Ahmad Shah conquered Khorasan in 1750-1754, where there had emerged several small feudal domains after the assassination of Nadir Shah Afshar. In most of the conquered Khorasan cities, as, for example, in Meshhed and Nishapur, local khans remained in power. However, some of the eastern regions of Khorasan were included in the Herat province of Afghanistan. In the west Ahmad Shah also subdued Seistan in the summer of 1754 and its rulers pledged themselves to pay tribute and supply troop contingents for the shah's army. In the south-west Nasir Khan, the ruler of Baluchistan, became a vassal of Ahmad Shah in 1750.

Ahmad Shah incorporated the Punjab into his state in 1750-1752, but lost the whole of the province (with the exception of the Multan region) in the 1760s as a result of the victorious uprisings of the Sikhs.*

Kashmir, the pearl of Afghan territorial possessions in India, was seized in 1752. And though later the vicegerents of that province often rose in arms against the Durrani shahs, Kashmir remained in their hands up to 1819.

Ahmad Shah subdued Sind in the lower reaches of the Indus. He left behind an Afghan vicegerent in the northern part of Sind (the town of Shikarpur) and the rulers of lower Sind became vassals to the Durrani shahs. The ruler of Bahawalpur, too, became a vassal of the Afghan shahs.

In 1750-1752 Ahmad Shah's army conquered several small Uzbek khanates north of the Hindu Kush: Balkh, Shibirghan, Andhoi, Qunduz, and Meymaneh. Balkh was chosen for the residency of the Afghan vicegerent and local rulers were left nearly in all of the other khanates. However, the power of the conquerors was rather feeble. Though Balkh remained in the power of the Durrani shahs, not a single rupee from the city reached their treasury. Timur Shah (1773-1793), Ahmad Shah's son and successor, could not find anyone who would agree to be the ruler there. The shah's enemies joked on that score: "The Loutis, who wandered from town to town with monkeys and other animals, taught them to cast earth upon their heads ... when they were asked whether they would be governors of Balkh."[5] By the beginning of the 19th century Qunduz, Meymaneh, Andhoi and Shibirghan had become fully independent, and even in Balkh the power of the Afghan vicegerent had become merely nominal.

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* Sikhs (Sanskrit, "disciples"), followers of the Hinduist sect which emerged in the Punjab in the 16th century. In the 17th century Sikhism became the banner of a wide popular movement against the power of the Great Moghuls and, beginning with the middle of the 18th century, against the Durrani shahs. In 1799 Shah Zaman (1793-1801), the grandson of Ahmad Shah, gave an investiture for the administration of Lahore to Ranjit Singh, a young but influential Sikh sardar. Having subdued a great part of Afghan lands in North-Western India, Ranjit Singh created a powerful state (with the Punjab as its core) which existed until 1849.

The borderline of the Durrani state thus depended on the expansion policy of Ahmad Shah and his successors, on their successes and setbacks. In the spring of 1761, when Ahmad Shah was in the prime of his might, the south-eastern border of his domain ran less than 100 kilometres from Delhi and their total area exceeded 2,000,000 square kilometres.

The Durrani state under Ahmad Shah was one of the largest states in the Middle East. The trade routes linking Iran, Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan with the states of South Asia ran through its territory. Ahmad Shah maintained diplomatic relations with many countries. In the years of his rule the Russian government made the first attempt to establish equal and friendly relations with Afghanistan.[6]

However, the conquests of Ahmad Shah and his successors had different consequences for the Afghan (Pashtun) and non-Afghan parts of the Durrani state. In the Afghan lands they speeded up the development of feudal relations and helped expand and consolidate feudal landownership by the Afghan khans and strengthen the feudal class as a whole. In the western vilayets the conquests forced a large number of Afghans to settle in the lands populated by Tajiks, who were gradually becoming leaseholders.[7] The fact that Afghan khans were given administrative powers, particularly those of tax collection, stimulated the seizure of the lands of the indigenous population. The fading away of tribal relations and of the vestiges of the tribal epoch and the development of feudal relations, for all the complexity of that process, doubtlessly signified progress. Therefore the epoch of the Durrani shahs, despite all its contradictions, left a deep imprint on the history of the Afghan people.

However, the consequences of the conquests by Ahmad Shah and his successors were all too different for the neighbouring countries, whose peoples in the latter half of the 18th century enjoyed a higher social and economic level. To them those conquests meant greater exploitation and ruin. The actions of Ahmad Shah prevented the unification of Iran under the Zend dynasty (1750-1794), and delayed the consolidation of the Sikh state in the Punjab and of the Mangyt state in Central Asia. At the same time the long and severe war between the Afghans and Sikhs and the rout of the army of the Marathis, the strongest one in India at the time,* by Ahmad Shah in 1761, weakened the peoples of India in the face of the impending British threat and, in the long run, made it easier for Britain to conquer the South Asian subcontinent.[8]

The economic foundation of the Durrani state was the feudal state's ownership of land: it levied a rent-tax from all the territories under its sovereignty. (That did not exclude the existence of both private and communal landownership and land tenure.) The surplus product taken from direct producers was distributed among the members of the feudal class which consisted of the following main groups: the Afghan tribal nobility, the Muslim theological elite (ulama), the tope echelon of the central and provincial civil government apparatus, the non-Afghan top military, the surviving local feudal families in a number of provinces conquered by Ahmad Shah, and the small feudal lords emerging in the community in the process of its disintegration.

Apart from the land tax,** the population had to pay a livestock tax, a mill tax, a tax in kind for the maintenance of the army, of the officials in charge of irrigation systems, headmen, and judges, and other taxes.

The taxes for the state treasury were not paid for all the lands under the supreme suzerainty of the shah. The *jagirdars* (holders of privileged land grants who had full tax immunity) had to pay no tax. Many lands granted by the shah or other individuals to various religious institutions were also tax-free. Many Afghan (Pashtun) tribes were also relieved of taxation if they served in the army. The Durrani tribe, to which the shah belonged, was placed in most privileged conditions. The tribe did not have to pay the land tax and taxes for livestock, gardens and vineyards and was relieved of many extraordinary taxes.

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* The state of the Marathis which was formed in the latter half of the 17th century in the western part of the South Asian subcontinent controlled a large part of India's territory by the middle of the 18th century.

** The chief land tax was the *salesat*, or a "one-third" tax, levied on irrigated land. Considering the importance of the tax, an official—mamur-i salesat—was put in charge of collecting it. The *kharaj*, which normally equalled one- tenth of the crop yield, was levied on dry valleys.

The main profits of the Durrani shahs came from the vilayets of North-Western India. The taxes collected from the western vilayets populated by non-Afghans (Kabulistan, Qandahar and Herat) and, of course, the taxes paid by the tribes, were of smaller significance. Even at the end of the 18th century, after the shahs lost the greater part of the Punjab, the western vilayets and the regions populated by the tribes accounted for not more than a quarter of all the revenues. Ahmad Shah used to say that the western part of his state gave him soldiers and the eastern part gave money. As for the Uzbek khanates south of the Amu Darya, the shah alluded to them as a beehive with too many bees and little honey.

After the formation of the Durrani state the Afghan khans used their dominating position in the state for building up their power and might to the utmost. The transfer of tax collecting functions to them and their endowment with administrative, military and legal power in the territories inhabited by their tribes increased the influence of the tribal nobility and facilitated their gradual turning into big feudal landowners. The growth of feudal landownership by the tribal khans was due to the expropriation of the non-Afghan peasantry (and partly their own tribesmen), and to generous land grants which they received from the Durrani shahs in the Afghan and non-Afghan vilayets of the state.* The expansion of feudal landownership was promoted by the entire land and tax policy of the Durrani shahs, who suppressed the resistance of Afghan and non-Afghan peasants alike. Therefore in the initial years of Ahmad Shah's rule relations between the shah and the Afghan tribal nobility were, on the whole, marked by loyal cooperation, due to their common interests.

The tribal khans, however, zealously protected their independence from the shahs. The shah's attempts to introduce effective control over the khans invariably came up against resistance. The growth of feudal landownership by the Afghan tribal elite, which retained considerable armed forces consisting of the khans' personal guards and volunteer units from among the tribesmen and had almost uncontrolled power in the territories occupied by these tribes, had already produced rudiments of inevitable separatist tendencies, which presented a serious threat to the integrity and unity of the Durrani state.

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* By the late 18th century the khans of various Durrani clans seized almost half of all taxed lands in the Qandahar vilayet. The amount of revenues received by the *jagirdars* was twice the share that went to the shah. Their domain in Herat was also large. In the Indian vilayets the largest domains of Afghan feudal lords were in Multan, the region of intensive Afghan colonisation.

So long as Ahmad Shah was winning his wars, during which the Afghan nobility enriched itself with immense spoils* and lavish land grants, he was helped readily by the khans. They even tolerated, to a certain extent, his interference in their internal affairs and his taking away part of their rent. The situation changed when Ahmad Shah and his successors began to suffer defeats, when the Punjab and some other provinces were lost.

The Afghan feudal lords tried to make up for the losses in India by seizing state-owned lands in Afghan regions proper. They also tried to augment their profits by reducing the share of the rent paid to the state, all the more so since the absolute increase of the rent was opposed by both the free members of the Afghan communities and the enslaved peasants who now and then rose in rebellion. The sources put it straight that the Afghan feudal lords demanded more land and a reduced land tax, but were often refused.[9] Simultaneously, there was a growth of separatist tendencies among some vilayet rulers who, as the profits of the provinces were reduced (due to the ruin of peasants and handicraftsmen and a decline in trade as a result of endless wars and feudal mutinies) grew more and more unwilling to share these profits with the central government.

In their effort to increase power and curb the separatism of big Afghan feudal lords, the Durrani shahs could rely on the guards (ghulam-shahi) recruited from among Ira-

* For instance, after capturing Delhi in 1757, Ahmad Shah imposed an indemnity of 10 million rupees on the city. When the Afghan army was returning home after the campaign to India the shah's loot was carried by 28,000 camels and buffalos. The artillery guns captured from the enemy had to be abandoned, for all the draught animals were loaded with the loot. The situation was much the same, although on a smaller scale, during the Khorasan expeditions.

nians, Tajiks, Hazaras and other non-Afghans, on the mostly Iranian-Tajik bureaucracy and the Muslim theological elite, who depended on the shahs, and, lastly, on the rich Indian merchants and usurers in the eastern vilayets of the state, who profited on levying state taxes and financing expeditions of conquest.* But these forces were clearly insufficient to resist the Afghan tribal khans. This made the Durrani shahs seek other ways of strengthening their power and influence.

Thus, to weaken the khans of the powerful Barakzai clan, Ahmad Shah separated the Achakzai family from it. He prohibited the Ghilzais, one of the biggest Afghan tribes, to have a khan. Ahmad Shah also made an attempt to set the powerful Durrani feudal nobility against the khans of East Afghan tribes. To that end, he created an artificial formation called bar-Durrani, that is, "upper" or "mountain" Durranis, comprising the Yusufzais, Tarklanris, Momands, Khattaks, and some other East Afghan tribes. But all those measures effected no cardinal change in the situation. The main cause of the weakness of the Durrani shahs was that the Afghan tribes and their khans almost fully retained their independence. The khans rose repeatedly even against Ahmad Shah.[10] Though those uprisings were suppressed by the shah, the breeding-ground for feudal plots and mutinies remained. Therefore the Afghan lands often caused Ahmad Shah and his successors no less worry and apprehension than the vilayets of North-Western India or Eastern Iran.

After the death of Ahmad Shah in 1773** his son and successor Timur Shah moved the capital from Qandahar, the outskirts of which were populated by the Durrani tribe, whose khans enjoyed great influence there, to Kabul. To consolidate his power, Timur Shah made an attempt to rule by relying on his personal guards, bureaucracy, the Muslim theological elite, and rich merchants, not inviting the tribal khans to offer solutions to state problems. He executed Shah Wali Khan Bamizai, his father's vizier, for his attempt to bring to the throne Sulayman, another son of the late shah and the husband of Shah Wali Khan's daughter, after the death of Ahmad Shah.[11] During his rule that post remained vacant. The reason for this was that, since the post of vizier belonged to the Bamizai clan and was hereditary, Timur Shah would have to appoint a relative of executed Shah Wali Khan as vizier, and he did not want to do that. Neither did he intend, in violation of the established tradition, to pass it over to a khan of another tribe or clan.

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* At the end of the 18th century some explorers knew Indian merchants in Kabul who possessed a capital of 10 million rupees. ("Khrisanf, Metropolitan of Novopatrassk, on Central Asian Countries Visited by Him in the 1790s", *Readings in the Imperial Society of History and Russian Antiquities*, Book 1, St. Petersburg, 1861, p. 11, in Russian.)

** Some sources mention 1772 as the year of his death. (See, for instance, *Mahmud al-Husayni, Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, Vol. II., Fol. 635a, 642b.)

Timur Shah's attempts to restrict the influence of Afghan aristocracy and bolster his own power came up against constant resistance on the part of tribal khans and vicegerents who organised uprisings.

As the shah's power weakened, some of the hakims (vilayet rulers) behaved in the provinces given them for administration as in their own domains. Sultan Mahmud Khan, for instance, the ruler of Muzaffarabad, divided the lands under his administration among the members of his family, leaving himself the city of Muzaffarabad and its outskirts "to have something to live on". There were repeated attempts on the life of Timur Shah. Some sources say he died of poisoning.[12]

In the last quarter of the 18th century big feudal landownership of the Afghan khans kept growing and the khans continued to plunder state-owned lands. At the same time the peoples subdued by Ahmad Shah were building up resistance. Uprisings flared up not only in the Punjab, but also in the north, in Southern Turkestan. All this left central power without a considerable part of tax revenues and made the Durrani shahs dependent on the tribal khans, for the shahs could no longer afford to maintain a strong guard contingent.

Timur Shah's son Shah Zaman made an attempt to put an end to the growing feudal decentralisation and stop the disintegration of the Durrani state. "He wanted to quash the influence of the tribal nobility, which led to greater feudal fragmentation, and to strengthen central power."[13] Many executions followed and property confiscations were widespread. Many hereditary posts were taken away from eminent khans and given to those who were not high-born but faithful to the shah. Shah Zaman even contemplated a transfer of the capital from Kabul to Lahore, which was motivated by the fact that he wanted to resume conquests in North-Western India. In 1799, the khans of the tribes, including the Durrani tribe, joined in a plot to limit the Shah's authority. They demanded, in particular, that shahs should be elected and the khans should have the right to elect or depose the head of the state. The main figure behind the plot was Payinda Khan, the powerful chief of the Barakzai clan. Though the plot was discovered and the plotters executed, Shah Zaman failed to strengthen his influence. Even the lavish land grants and the generous handouts of money and high titles did not help. Payinda Khan's son Fateh Khan Barakzai and other khans who were dissatisfied with Shah Zaman backed shahzade Mahmud, his brother and rival who had taken refuge in Iran. Zaman was dethroned and blinded, and Shah Mahmud (1801-1803) who was brought to power by a clique of Durrani khans, was a toy in their hands. Some time later he was also overthrown, to be replaced by another brother of Shah Zaman–Shah Shuja ul-Mulk (1803-1809). After that Shah Mahmud was put back on the throne and ruled from 1809 to 1818. Each of these palace revolutions was followed by a distribution among the tribal khans of what remained of the vast treasure grabbed by Ahmad Shah during his victorious expeditions, and by new land grants. Having neither real power or resources, the shahs fell into increasing dependence on the good will of the Durrani chiefs.[14]

During the reign of the last Durrani shahs at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the architects of the British colonial policy made the first open attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. To prevent an alliance between Shah Zaman and Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, a state in Southern India, the British East India Company, relying on its influence in Iran, made the Iranian authorities help shahzade Mahmud in his struggle for the Afghan throne. In this way the British colonial leaders helped to overthrow Shah Zaman. Late in 1808 a diplomatic mission headed by M. Elphinstone was sent to Afghanistan. Its head managed to conclude an agreement with Shah Shuja on June 17, 1809. The agreement made it binding on the shah not to let French troops pass through the territory of Afghanistan in the event of an expedition of Napoleon I to India, and not to join the Franco-Russo-Iranian alliance.* Soon after the signing of the agreement Shah Shuja was dethroned and the agreement was rendered null and void.

Feudal anarchy now reigned supreme in the Durrani state. The province rulers virtually became independent princes. In 1810 Muzaffar Khan, the hakim of Multan, receiving no help from the central government in his struggle against the onslaught of the Sikhs, entered into talks with the governor-general of the British East India Company, proposing himself as a vassal of the British. Jahandad Khan Nurzai, the ruler of Attok, sold that major strategic region, which controlled the crossing of the Indus, to Ranjit Singh, the maharaja of the Punjab. Inter-tribal clashes and wars grew more intense. International transit trade across Afghanistan was on the decline. In that situation real power went completely to the khans of the most powerful Afghan feudal clans, among which the Barakzai clan headed by Fateh Khan was the strongest. Fateh Khan was popularly known as "taj-bakhsh", "the giver of the crown", for he handed the crown of the shah of Afghanistan now to one, now to another descendant of Ahmad Shah.

The provinces included by Ahmad Shah in the Durrani state were either becoming independent or dependent on stronger neighbours. Sind, Baluchistan, Bahawalpur, Seistan, Khorasan, and the khanates and provinces of Southern Turkestan got out of control by the Afghan shahs. The lands on the right bank of the Indus and Kashmir became the prey of maharaja Ranjit Singh, who had subdued the whole of the Punjab.

In the Afghan areas proper feudal decentralisation led to the emergence of several independent feudal principalities. In most of them, as in Kabul, Qandahar and Peshawar, power was seized by the Barakzai khans in 1819. Only in Herat did a grandson of Ahmad Shah, Shah Mahmud, retain power (having lost the shah's throne in 1818, he ruled Herat till 1829). He was succeeded by his son Kamran who ruled Herat until 1842.

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* The text of the agreement is given by Said Qasim Rishtiya in his book *Afghanistan in the 19th Century*, Moscow, 1958, pp. 57-58 (in Russian).

Some of those principalities were united into one state under different historical conditions in the mid-19th century.

The New Unification of Afghanistan and the Beginning of British Aggression

After the downfall of the Durrani state, Afghanistan broke up into several independent feudal domains, of which the Herat, Kabul, Qandahar and Peshawar principalities were the largest. Many of the Afghan tribes living in the mountain areas retained independence. The overthrow of the Sadozai dynasty and the emergence of several large and small independent feudal domains on the debris of the Durrani state were the result of the prolonged crisis that had befallen that state. But in the first decades of the 19th century conditions had already emerged for overcoming the crisis and consolidating the political situation. In economic terms, this consolidation was ensured by the development of commodity-money relations within the more or less closed regional markets that had taken shape around Kabul, Peshawar, Herat and Qandahar.[15]

In political terms, the stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan in the early 19th century was facilitated by the fact that the khans, who had expanded their domains, needed great power to guard their possessions against encroachments by other feudal lords. At the same time, the feudal landlords needed the mighty state power to suppress the resistance of the exploited peasants.

The years of political strife in Afghanistan coincided with the time when the might of the Sikhs' state in the Punjab was at its peak under maharaja Ranjit Singh. In the early 19th century the British colonial conquerors had already eyed the Punjab as their future prey and at that moment it suited them that the Afghan border areas be ruled by Ranjit Singh. But they planned to enslave the Sikhs and the Afghans alike.

Having subdued Multan in 1818, and Kashmir in 1819, the Sikhs began to subjugate the areas populated by Afghans on the right bank of the Indus. In 1819, they conquered Dera Ghazi Khan and in 1821 Dera Ismail Khan and won a dominating position in the Afghan regions along the middle reaches of the Indus.

In 1823, Ranjit Singh, who was previously satisfied with the nominal recognition of his suzerainty by the Peshawar khans, moved his troops towards Peshawar. His aim was to put an end to the Kabul rulers' influence in the region. The decisive battle between the Sikhs and the Afghans was fought at Naushahra in March 1823. Ranjit Singh won the battle and seized Peshawar, after which this major economic and cultural centre remained outside the Afghan state.

The next ruler of Kabul was Dost Muhammad Khan, who came to power in 1826. An energetic ruler, he soon subdued Ghazni and greatly extended his domain. Later on, he persistently sought leadership over his brothers who ruled other regions and cities in Afghanistan. The objective outcome of Dost Muhammad Khan's policy was that the feudal divisions were largely, although not completely, overcome, and this signified a new stage in the history of the Afghan state.

One of the most important achievements of Dost Muhammad Khan was the formation of a regular army. The long-barrelled muskets made by Kabul gunsmiths had a longer fire range than even the guns used at that time by the British colonial army in India. With his new troops, Dost Muhammad Khan extended his rule to a number of Afghan regions. Towards the end of 1833 he subdued Jalalabad.

The growing strength of the independent principality of Kabul and the successes of Dost Muhammad Khan in uniting the state ran counter to the British plans for expansion in Afghanistan and then in Central Asia. The East India Company adopted a tough policy with regard to Dost Muhammad Khan to remove that obstacle. To frustrate his efforts to unite Afghanistan, the Company made an attempt to use former shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, its paid stooge who lived in India. In 1833, the British, who were preparing Shuja's offensive against Afghanistan, agreed that Ranjit Singh should support Shuja. The East India Company also attempted to set Afghan chiefs against Dost Muhammad Khan.

In March 1834 Shuja with a 22,000-strong army, recruited and armed with the help of the East India Company, set out to Qandahar through the Bolan Pass. The Qandahar rulers turned to Dost Muhammad Khan for help. Late in

June 1834, Shuja was defeated in the battle at the settlement of Qala-eh Azim, not far from Qandahar, and fled. The Sikhs thereby added Peshawar and the area around it to their domains.

Dost Muhammad Khan could not reconcile himself to the loss of Peshawar. The negotiations with Ranjit Singh proved futile, and in September 1834 Dost Muhammad Khan declared a "jihad" (sacred war) against the Sikhs. As a sacred war could be declared only by a sovereign Muslim ruler, he had been given the title of emir (amir al-muminin, which means "the ruler of the faithful") by the Muslim theologians of Kabul. Dost Muhammad Khan renounced the title of shah, probably afraid of causing discontent among his numerous ambitious and envious brothers. Having raised some 500,000 rupees with great difficulty, he equipped a fairly large army and, reinforced with the troops of the Afghan tribes, set out for Peshawar. But the expedition ended in failure, even though it never came to a decisive battle. Exploiting the discord between Dost Muhammad Khan and the sardars of Peshawar (Sultan Muhammad Khan and his brothers), Ranjit Singh managed to win them over to his side. After a large part of his army had abandoned Dost Muhammad Khan, he returned to Kabul.

The emir could still not reconcile himself to the loss of Peshawar. Realising that the British did not wish to help him get Peshawar back, and that the policy of the East India Company, which backed Ranjit Singh and Shuja, was the main obstacle to the unification of Afghanistan, Dost Muhammad Khan made a few important foreign policy moves. In September 1835 he sent an envoy to the Shah of Iran with a letter proposing that they should combine their efforts in the struggle against the ruler of Herat.

In October 1835, the emir dispatched a letter to the Russian tsar Nicholas I which was delivered by Afghan messengers to Orenburg in May 1836.

The governor of Orenburg, V. A. Perovsky, who attached great significance to this diplomatic move aimed at establishing friendly relations between Afghanistan and Russia, sent the Afghan envoys, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, I. V. Vitkevich, to St. Petersburg.

In May 1836, Dost Muhammad Khan asked Lord Auckland, the governor-general of India, to help him regulate Afghan-Sikh relations. The Afghan emir agreed to recognise the Sikhs' claims to Kashmir on the condition that Peshawar was returned to him. But a reunion of Peshawar with Afghanistan did not suit the British colonial policy-makers, and the emir's proposal was turned down.

I. V. Vitkevich, who accompanied the Afghan envoys from Orenburg to St. Petersburg, was later appointed Russia's representative in Kabul by the tsarist foreign ministry. It was his duty, according to his instructions, to help reconcile the "Afghan rulers", that is, Dost Muhammad Khan and Kohandil Khan, the ruler of Qandahar. Vitkevich had to make it clear to the Barakzai rulers "that, owing to the long distance between Russia and Afghanistan, the former could not render them effective aid, but did, nevertheless, have sincere sympathy with them and would always intercede for them through the mediatorship of Persia". Besides, he was instructed to discover opportunities for expanding Russo-Afghan trade.[16]

On his way to Kabul Vitkevich stayed in Qandahar, where he took part in the negotiations between the Iranians and Kohandil Khan during which a decision was taken to form an alliance against the Sadozai ruler of Herat. In December 1837, Vitkevich arrived in the capital of Dost Muhammad Khan, where the British mission headed by Sir Alexander Burnes was on a visit at that moment.

In the circumstances obtaining, with the approval of tsarist diplomats, the Iranian ruler Muhammad Shah set out for Herat with a large army and besieged the city in October 1837. From an international point of view, the situation in Afghanistan was becoming increasingly explosive.

The British, in their turn, rendered material aid to Herat ruler Kamran. Besides, Eldred Pottinger, an officer they had sent to Herat, actually supervised the defence of the city. Meanwhile, I. Blaramberg of the Russian embassy acted as military adviser to the Shah of Iran.

The aim of the British mission in Kabul, headed by Sir Alexander Burnes, was to set the stage for the conquest of Afghanistan by the East India Company.[17] Burnes's task was to prevent a rapprochement between Dost Muhammad Khan and the Barakzai rulers of Qandahar, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, and to impede their joint attack on Herat. But Burnes's mission failed, primarily because of the aggressive intentions of the British colonial policy-makers with regard to Afghanistan.

During the talks Burnes received a letter of instructions from Lord Auckland stating that the claims of Dost Muhammad Khan to Peshawar should be categorically rejected and that it should be made clear to him that the British would openly support Ranjit Singh in his attack on Afghanistan unless the emir discontinued his friendly relations with Iran and Russia. Burnes was also told to demand that Dost Muhammad Khan should break off relations with Russia and Iran, expel Vitkevich from Kabul immediately and never again receive Russian or Iranian representatives without the permission of the British authorities. Dost Muhammad Khan rejected this ultimatum and in April 1838 Burnes left Kabul.

In these circumstances Vitkevich assisted in reconciling Dost Muhammad Khan with the ruler of Qandahar, Kohandil Khan, and persuaded them to set up a defensive alliance with Iran to repel the impending British attack. The treaty was to come into force provided the tsarist government offered its guarantees. Vitkevich also reached an understanding with Dost Muhammad Khan on expanding trade between Russia and Afghanistan. He did, moreover, promise the emir Russia's assistance in the struggle for the return of Peshawar, and this had a favourable effect on the outcome of the talks.

But at that time substantial changes were taking place in the policy of the Russian tsarist government which obstructed the pursuance of the former policy of countering British expansion in the Middle East. Seeking a rapprochement with Britain in the efforts to settle the Turco-Egyptian conflict and hoping to gain British support with regard to the straits, the tsarist government made concessions over the Herat issue. Vitkevich left Afghanistan. The Shah of Iran and the Qandahar ruler were informed of the tsar's refusal to approve the Iran-Afghan treaty. The results of the diplomatic efforts of Vitkevich's mission were reduced to nil.

But, in spite of all that, the British continued to use Vitkevich's mission as a pretext for unleashing a war against Afghanistan, alleging that Dost Muhammad Khan's contacts with Iran and Russia threatened the security of British India.

While making political preparations for a war against Afghanistan, the major promoters of British colonial policy attempted to persuade Ranjit Singh, whose relations with Dost Muhammad Khan remained hostile, to take an active part in the war. Ranjit Singh refused to make any concessions to Dost Muhammad Khan with regard to the return of Peshawar. On the contrary, during the long negotiations he exploited international tensions in a bid to secure new possessions in Afghan territory or political advantages for himself.

In May 1838 William Macnaghten, secretary for foreign affairs of the governor-general of India, was sent to Lahore for talks with Ranjit Singh. He managed to persuade the latter to sign a treaty of alliance with Shuja, which was guaranteed by the East India Company. Under the treaty, which was signed in July 1838, the East India Company and Ranjit Singh assumed commitments to reinstate Shuja as the shah of Afghanistan. In return for military and political support promised him, Shuja agreed to cede Sind (which he did not possess) to the British and reaffirmed his giving up to the Sikhs, "for all time to come", Peshawar, Multan, Kashmir and other territories conquered by Ranjit Singh, previously possessions of the Sadozai shahs of Afghanistan. Shuja also promised that he would not annex Herat to his future state. The foreign policy of Afghanistan and that of the Sikhs' state were to be subject to British control. Under the treaty, Shuja, when back on the throne, would invite British army officers to organise an army.

Wishing to avoid aggravation of relations with Britain, Ranjit Singh yielded to its diplomatic pressure and signed the treaty, but he refused to let the troops of the East India Company pass through the territory of the Punjab. The East India Company had to change not only the initial plan for its troop movements, but also the composition of the troops by including British regular units in the expeditional corps, in addition to the units of India Sepoys.

The next British move in preparing to invade Afghanistan was to bring pressure to bear on the Shah of Iran to lift the siege of Herat. The British government even went as far as severing diplomatic relations with Iran. Faced with the threat of war, the Shah was compelled to put an end to the siege late in August and early in September 1838.

After the British had forced tsarist diplomacy to retreat, signed a treaty with Ranjit Singh and Shuja and compelled the Shah of Iran to withdraw his troops from Herat, they speeded up preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan. To justify the war of aggression and conceal its true motives, Lord Auckland, governor-general of India, published a declaration in Simla on October 1, 1838, which surpassed in its hypocrisy and lies even the most despicable documents in the history of colonial policy. It urged that Dost Muhammad Khan should be toppled and Shuja be put on the Afghan throne with the help of the East India Company's armies.

On the eve of the British invasion, the territory ruled by Dost Muhammad Khan stretched from Kohistan (north of Kabul) to Mukur in the south-west, and from Bamiyan in the north-west to the Khyber Pass in the south-east. The population of that territory was about 1.3 million.

The Qandahar principality was divided among the brothers Kohandil, Rahmdil and Mehrdil. Each of the rulers had his own court and received his share of profits from the principality according to seniority, collecting taxes from the population of the territory under his rule. The total population in the principality was approximately 700 to 800 thousand. The domestic situation there was unstable. There was much unrest not only among the peasants, but among the urban population as well. Furthermore, a large part of the ruling class—the khans of the Durrani tribes whose privileges were infringed upon by the Qandahar rulers, and the Sunnite theologians denouncing the contacts between the Qandahar rulers and Shiitic Iran—opposed the authorities. The Qandahar principality was weakened by enmity among the ruling brothers. The leaders of the East India Company knew the Barakzais' weak spots and hoped to take advantage of them in the coming war.

At the end of 1838, the troops of the East India Company under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Keane set out for Afghanistan. Early in April 1839 all the units that were to invade Afghanistan through Qandahar, were assembled in Quetta. The "Army of Indus", as it was called, numbered about 20,000 officers and men serving in line. But the total strength of the army was far greater, for it was accompanied by nearly 38,000 transport and camp attendants. The actual leader of the expedition was Sir William Macnaghten, secretary of the Anglo-Indian government, who served as "ambassador and minister" under Shuja.

The troops began to move towards Qandahar in mid-April. At first, they met hardly any resistance on the part of the Afghans. Moreover, some of the influential Afghan sardars, bribed by the British, took Shuja's side as the Army of Indus approached Qandahar.

The ceremony of reinstating Shuja on the throne took place soon after the British troops had entered Qandahar. On May 7, 1839, just before the ceremony, he signed an eight-clause treaty aimed at abolishing Afghanistan's independence. It confirmed the treaty concluded in July 1838 and Shuja's consent to the isolation of Afghanistan from the outside world and to the presence of British occupation forces in Afghanistan, and included other provisions.[18]

The situation with which Dost Muhammad Khan, who was getting ready to repel the invaders, was faced, was made more difficult by the uprising in Kohistan, in the Kabul area. Still, he managed to dispatch part of his best forces under the command of his son Muhammad Akbar Khan to the Khyber Pass, and to assemble troops in Ghazni and in Kabul.

The people's antipathy to shah Shuja, who had arrived in their country with foreign troops, was evident right from the very start of the war. The Afghans' resistance took the form of a religious war against the British.

On July 21, 1839, the advanced detachments of the British forces approached the Ghazni fortress, which was believed to be unassailable and well defended against a siege. But the defenders of the city were betrayed: the British were informed about the number of troops in Ghazni and had learned of the most vulnerable spot in the city defences, the Kabul Gates, which had not been barricaded. The British troops took the city by storm and massacred its population.[19]

A week later, they set out for Kabul, having left a garrison in the fortress. Meanwhile, an 11,000-strong British detachment was moving towards Kabul through the Khyber Pass. Soon the British captured Jalalabad.

With about 6,000 troops Dost Muhammad Khan was moving from Kabul towards the British and Shuja. But he was betrayed by some of his army commanders, abandoned his army, and retreated to Bamiyan and then northwards to Hulm with his family and a few retainers. His troops dispersed. On August 7, the British and Shuja entered the capital unhindered.

The shah was given the Bala Hissar castle in Kabul for his numerous household. Outside it, the foreigners, hated by the people, ruled the country on his behalf. Sir William Macnaghten, the conceited and self-opinionated chief representative of the East India Company, the shah's "ambassador and minister", enjoyed dictatorial powers in the country.

Intoxicated by their easily won victories in the colonial wars, the British officials and army officers believed their situation in the occupied country was secure. Disregarding elementary precautions, the British command stationed the troops in a marshy lowland on the outskirts of Kabul, most improperly in military terms. In addition, part of the occupation forces was soon withdrawn from Afghanistan and the garrison near Kabul was greatly reduced. Meanwhile, a guerrilla war had started in Afghanistan, and unrest among various sections of the population was mounting. The British had to give up the plan of an immediate offensive on south Turkestan, where Dost Muhammad Khan had taken refuge, because the local population was making ready to offer them resistance.

Dost Muhammad Khan attempted to unite the forces of several khanates on the left bank of the Amu Darya to strike back at the occupation forces. But, having failed in that, he entered into negotiations with Nasrullah Khan, the emir of Bokhara, and the Shah of Persia. The emir of Bokhara invited him to his domains, promising shelter and hinting at possible aid. But when Dost Muhammad Khan arrived in Bokhara, he was given a cool welcome, put under surveillance, and found himself in the position of a prisoner. No aid, of course, was to be expected from the emir of Bokhara, and his only hope now was to escape unharmed.[20]

After some time, Dost Muhammad Khan ventured to escape. He reached Shakhrisyabz with great difficulty. From there he went to the ruler of Hulm who helped him gather forces to offer resistance to the British. In the summer of

1840 the alarming news reached Kabul: Dost Muhammad Khan was back, assembling troops under his colours.

Meanwhile popular unrest was mounting in Afghanistan. Ghilzai uprisings followed one another, the one in April 1840 being the biggest. Popular protest erupted in the Qandahar and Khyber regions and in many other areas.

In August, Dost Muhammad Khan moved towards Bamiyan. The British found themselves in a real fix and were saved from being routed in that region by the arrival of a strong reinforcement from Kabul commanded by Colonel Dennie. In September, the British troops, who were greatly superior in artillery, defeated a poorly armed volunteer force of Dost Muhammad Khan. But he did not lay down arms and went to Kohistan in the Kabul region, where he headed popular resistance and created a serious situation for Shuja and the British garrison.

Large contingents were moved from Kabul against Dost Muhammad Khan. In the battle at Parvan on November 2, 1840, the British were defeated, suffering heavy losses in dead and wounded. They retreated in fear of an uprising in the rear, or an encirclement. But precisely at that moment, for reasons we still do not know, Dost Muhammad Khan left his army, arrived in Kabul and surrendered to the surprised British. Anxious to remove the popular emir from the country as soon as possible, they sent him off to India heavily guarded.

Immediately after the emir's capitulation the wave of insurrection in Afghanistan was at a low ebb, and a calm seemed to set in. But that was the calm before the storm. Very soon the whole nation rose to struggle, and this had a decisive effect on the further developments. In the spring and summer of 1841 the flame of popular war was spreading throughout the country. The clergy, who saw the establishment of the power of "the infidels" (the British) as a desecration of the Muslim faith, ceased to mention the name of Shuja in Friday prayers. The toiling people protested against the mounting burden of taxes.

In the winter of 1840-1841 many regions of Afghanistan were hit by famine. Food supplies on the outskirts of the capital were meagre, too. Large purchases of food and forage for the British camp soon caused a sharp rise in the food prices on the Kabul markets. The British conquerors turned the whole population of Afghanistan against them. But neither the spreading popular discontent, nor the rising tide of insurrections shook the confidence of the British leaders, including Macnaghten, in the stability of their position in the occupied country.

In September 1841, the imminence of an important event became quite evident. The Ghilzais undertook a large armed action during which they disrupted the communications between the Kabul garrison and India; after this, during the night of November 1, the Kabul uprising began. The insurgents encircled the houses of Alexander Burnes and other British officers. After unsuccessful attempts to pacify the insurgents and pay a ransom, Burnes escaped disguised as a woman but was spotted and killed.

Taking part in the Kabul uprising were the city poor, artisans and traders, and also peasants from nearby villages. They were soon joined by units of Afghan tribes which had come to the capital. The British troops stationed in the Sherpur Camp near Kabul were demoralised and took no effective action against the insurgents. The capital was now entirely in the hands of the insurgents. On November 5 the Afghans seized British food stores. The British garrison found itself in a poor plight. After a fierce battle, in which several hundred British troops had been killed and the Afghans had captured part of the British artillery, the insurgents controlled the key positions on the Bemaru heights.

By that time the most outstanding among the leaders of the Afghan liberation struggle was Muhammad Akbar Khan, the emir's son. Sir William Macnaghten was compelled to enter into negotiations with the Afghan leaders, and on December 11, 1841, he signed an agreement on the withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan, the release of the prisoners of war and the return of Dost Muhammad Khan.

But to Macnaghten the signing of the agreement was merely a stratagem. Just as before, he sought to provoke discord among the insurgents and contemplated kidnapping and murdering their leaders. However, Muhammad Akbar Khan guessed his intentions. In anticipation of his actions, he attempted to take him prisoner during the talks on December 23, 1841. Macnaghten offered resistance and Muhammad Akbar Khan killed him.

Macnaghten's death spread panic among the British. A new agreement was signed between the British leaders and the Afghan sardars on January 1, 1842, which provided for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan. Some 4,500 officers and men left Ķabul with nine field guns, and 12,000 camp and transport attendants. The severe winter and attacks by Afghan guerrillas turned the retreat of the demoralised British and Sepoy units into a catastrophe, for the whole of the occupation army was destroyed. Early in 1842 Afghan detachments were still attacking the British garrisons remaining in some towns and regions of the country.

With the foreign troops out of Kabul, Shuja, pressed by the popular masses, was compelled to declare a "sacred war" on the British and set out for Jalalabad, where he secretly hoped to join the British camp. But on his way there he was attacked by a Barakzai sardar with a group of supporters. Shuja was charged with treason and shot on the spot.[21]

Early in April 1842, the units commanded by General Pollock rushed from Peshawar to the aid of the besieged Jalalabad garrison. Meeting almost no resistance on their way (the chiefs of the Afghan tribes in the Khyber region had been bribed by the British), the units approached Jalalabad on April 17.

Muhammad Akbar Khan negotiated with Pollock the terms of the British troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of Dost Muhammad Khan from captivity, but, on learning of Shuja's death and the enthronement of his son, Fateh Jang, he left urgently for Kabul. There he occupied the post of vizier under Fateh Jang who did, however, flee to the British in Jalalabad.

Meanwhile, the newly appointed governor-general of India Ellenborough sent additional instructions to the troops, virtually ordering a punitive expedition. In August 1842 the British marched on Kabul and soon occupied it. Fateh Jang was reinstated in Bala Hissar. The British colonialists plundered and burned Kabul and its outskirts, killing thousands of civilians. British punitive detachments operated in several regions of the country.

But, for all that, the British could not keep Afghanistan under control. The continuing war waged by the population forced them to leave the country. Aware that he could not retain power without foreign support, Fateh Jang abdicated the throne. Before leaving Kabul, the British installed Shahpur, another son of Shuja, in his stead. As soon as he learnt that Muhammad Akbar Khan was getting ready for action, the new shah fled the capital. Early in 1843 Dost Muhammad Khan was allowed to return home. Thus, the British admitted the failure of their policy in Afghanistan. That spelled the end of the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1838-1842.

The heroic struggle of the Afghan peoples led to a victory over a strong and dangerous enemy. The courageous soldiers and volunteers from various tribes, well experienced in guerrilla warfare, made the most of the mountainous terrain. Most effective were the strikes made by the Ghilzais who often blocked the roads from Kabul to Qandahar and Jalalabad. The feats of the 1838-1842 war left their mark on the patriotic traditions of the peoples of Afghanistan.

Back in power, Dost Muhammad Khan persistently continued to pursue a policy of uniting the country. It took him a good deal of time and effort to establish effective power over a number of regions in his domains, because the Kabul principality had, in fact, broken up into separate parts. Therefore the emir appointed his sons the rulers of towns and provinces.

In the mid-1840s Dost Muhammad Khan controlled no more than a quarter of the territory of present-day Afghanistan. Kohandil Khan was again the independent ruler of Qandahar; after the death of Kamran in 1842 all power in Herat was in the hands of his vizier Yar Muhammad. In unifying the country, Dost Muhammad Khan relied on the army he had restored. He was reorganising it, improving its armaments and combat readiness.

In 1843, the East India Company seized Sind whose emirs had recognised the supreme power of Afghan rulers in the past. As a result of the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-1846, the East India Company established control over the Punjab, after which the territory of the Sikh state was greatly diminished and it only formally became independent. The actual master in Lahore was the British resident. In April 1848, Sikh army units in Multan rose against British rule. In November of the same year the troops of the East India Company crossed the Sikh border without declaring a war. The second Anglo-Sikh war began.

Dost Muhammad Khan and his men were aware of the great danger for the future of Afghanistan presented by the new onslaught of the British colonial aggressors in North-West India. At the end of 1848, responding to the request of Chattar Singh, the Sikh viceroy of the Hazara region, for military aid in fighting the British, Dost Muhammad Khan concluded an agreement with him. The Afghan emir promised to send troops and the Sikhs promised to give him back Peshawar.

The troops of Dost Muhammad Khan, including an Afghan cavalry unit, entered the Peshawar area. But that relatively insignificant support could not tip the balance of forces which was not in favour of the Sikhs. In February 1849 the troops of the East India Company inflicted a decisive defeat on the Sikhs and occupied the whole of the Punjab. In March of that year the Punjab officially became part of British colonial possessions in India. Further struggle for Peshawar threatened to develop into a war against the British, so Dost Muhammad Khan decided to retreat. The Afghan population of Peshawar and other regions which had previously been seized by the Sikhs, was now ruled by the British colonialists.

Dost Muhammad Khan returned to Afghanistan and, having lost all hope of being successful in the east and south-east, he focussed his attention on the north, sending a large military expedition there. That marked the beginning of the conquest by Afghan emirs of the regions on the left bank of the Amu Darya, which lasted many years. In the 1850s the domains of Dost Muhammad Khan already included a new province—Afghan Turkestan, with Muhammad Afzal Khan, the emir's eldest son, as its ruler.

However, the international situation and the developments in British India made British diplomacy seek a rapprochement with Dost Muhammad Khan. At that time, the British ruling circles were quite prepared to be content with controlling Dost Muhammad Khan's foreign policy and using Afghanistan as an ally against Iran and as an instrument in their overt and covert struggle against Russian influence in the Middle East. The British did therefore support the Afghan emir for some years with money and weapons. Dost Muhammad Khan, for his part, accepted the proposals of the East India Company on improving mutual relations, for he needed peace, above all, to strengthen his power and unite Afghanistan.

The initial understanding between the British authorities in India and Dost Muhammad Khan was evidently reached at the end of the first Anglo-Afghan war, when the British allowed the emir to go to Afghanistan.[22] In the mid-1850s Dost Muhammad Khan chose a rapprochement with Britain, caused, among other things, by the threat to Herat from Iran.

The talks between the emir of Afghanistan and Britain resulted in the signing of an agreement consisting of three articles on March 30, 1855. Article One of the agreement proclaimed the establishment of friendship and peace between the East India Company and Dost Muhammad Khan and his successors. In Articles Two and Three the sides pledged themselves to respect the integrity of each other's territory. In addition, Dost Muhammad Khan made a promise that he and his successors would "be the friends of the friends and the enemies of the enemies" of the East India Company. Meanwhile the British side made no such commitment. This just goes to show that the agreement was unequal, for it provided Britain with far greater benefits and unilateral advantages: it meant that Britain gained an ally without assuming the obligations that usually exist between allied countries.

The promise given by Dost Muhammad Khan to respect the integrity of the East India Company's territory was recognition of its right to the possession of Peshawar and other regions populated by Afghans which had been seized by the British colonialists in 1849. The tearing away of a number of Afghan-populated regions, later formalised by the unequal agreement with Dost Muhammad Khan owing to the annexation of the Punjab by the British, marked the initial stage in the emergence of the Pushtunistan problem.

The loss of a large part of the Afghan lands under the 1855 agreement and the unilateral commitments were the price paid by Dost Muhammad Khan for the British aid in money and weapons, for the East India Company's promise not to interfere in the internal affairs of his state and for the consent not to obstruct the annexation of Qandahar, and later Herat, to his domains.

Afghanistan in the Latter Half of the 19th Century

In the 1850s and early 1860s Dost Muhammad Khan succeeded in uniting the main regions of Afghanistan under his rule, which had been part of that state since the mid-18th century, with the exception of Peshawar and other towns and regions on the right bank of the Indus which became part of the British colonial possessions in India in 1849. The economic ties among the regions of the feudal state of Dost Muhammad Khan had not yet become sufficiently well established. For some time the emir managed to curb the separatist tendencies of the numerous local feudal lords. But the state he had unified still lacked stability as was evidenced during the internecine wars that erupted in Afghanistan after the death of Dost Muhammad Khan.

At the close of his rule Dost Muhammad Khan launched an expedition to Herat. In June 1862 he set out from Qandahar with a strong army, reached Herat early in July, besieged the city, and captured it in May of the following year.

But that was his last victory. On June 9, 1863, Dost Muhammad Khan died in Herat. After his death, at a ceremony in Herat, his heir, Sher Ali Khan, was proclaimed the emir of Afghanistan in the presence of nearly all the sons of the deceased. Soon after that, Sher Ali Khan set out for Kabul, leaving in Herat a strong garrison and his third son Yaqub (at that time under age) as the ruler.[23]

At first, all the brothers of Sher Ali Khan recognised his power. But soon an internecine war flared up among them and the hostilities spread throughout the country. Muhammad Afzal and Muhammad Azam struggled for the throne of the emir. Muhammad Amin and Muhammad Sharif were opposed to the spread of the power of Sher Ali Khan to the regions that they regarded as their own hereditary domains. The other brothers stirred up rebellions in response to the emir's attempts to abolish some feudal privileges such as the right to have troops and not to pay land taxes to the treasury. Among the first to oppose the new emir was Muhammad Azam, who operated from Zurmat. But he could not hold out against the emir's troops, escaped to Kohat and later settled in Rawalpindi, enjoying the patronage of the British authorities and receiving handouts from them.

The heads of the British colonial administration fed the fires of the internecine wars for their own reasons. Pursuing a "closed border" policy with regard to the neighbouring Afghan tribes, after the suppression of the Indian uprising of 1857-1859, the British colonial authorities, however, often sent punitive expeditions into their lands, mostly to the mountain regions between the Swat and the Indus. The Afghans were joined in their struggle against the British by emigrants from India, followers of the Muslim movement "tarika-i-muhammadiya".[24] The British colonialists regarded the Afghan lands bordering on India as the object of their future expansion and therefore did not want the influence and power of the Afghan emirs to grow stronger there. The internecine wars in Afghanistan suited them well.

The second year after the death of Dost Muhammad Khan saw a large armed conflict between emir Sher Ali Khan and his elder brother Afzal. The emir's troops won the battle in the mountainous Bajgah area, in a pass across the Hindu Kush. After that, Sher Ali Khan appointed Fateh Muhammad Khan the ruler of Afghan Turkestan, and Afzal and his family were taken to Kabul and then to Ghazni, where he was kept in detention.

Meanwhile, the internecine struggle was raging in Afghanistan. Among the active opponents of the emir were his brothers Muhammad Amin Khan and Muhammad Sharif Khan. A decisive battle against them was fought in June 1865 at Qajbaz, near Kalat-i-Ghilzai. During that battle, which was won by the emir's troops, Muhammad Ali Khan (the emir's beloved son and heir) and Muhammad Amin Khan fought each other in a duel, in which both were killed.[25] Sher Ali Khan lapsed into deep depression, remaining in Qandahar for a long time, unable to run the state. The news of this became publicly known, causing turmoil in the country, and in May 1866 Muhammad Afzal Khan captured Kabul, to become emir.

Sher Ali Khan, who had retreated from Qandahar to Herat, consolidated his power there and extended his influence to Afghan Turkestan. The leaders of the British colonial policy did not think twice about recognising

Muhammad Afzal Khan as the emir of Kabul and Qandahar, but at the same time they recognised Sher Ali Khan who ruled Herat. Dissatisfied with such a policy on the part of the British, Muhammad Afzal Khan did not trust them and made attempts to establish contacts with Russia, expecting to get more reliable support from that country.

In October 1867 Muhammad Afzal Khan died and the administration of Kabul passed to Muhammad Azam, who was proclaimed emir. But his rule turned out to be short-lived. During the internecine struggle in 1868 the balance tipped drastically in favour of Sher Ali Khan. The latter sent to Qandahar an army headed by his son Yaqub who captured the city in March of that year, and in September Sher Ali Khan occupied Kabul.

Toppled, Muhammad Azam and his nephew Abdurrahman (the son of Muhammad Afzal) tried to hold out against the adversary but were defeated and with a few people loyal to them, without money and with no hope of being able to continue the struggle, they crossed the border to live in exile.

Some time later, Muhammad Azam Khan died, and Abdurrahman Khan set out for the Khiva khanate across the Turkmenian deserts. After forty days of tiring travel, he arrived in Urgench, and then went to Bokhara and Samarkand.26

Abdurrahman spent more than ten years in Russia's Central Asian domains, receiving fairly lavish grants from the tsarist authorities. Although his permanent place of residence was Samarkand, he often stayed in Tashkent, attending receptions, holiday festivities and balls at the house of governor-general Kaufmann, who often invited him to watch military parades and exercises as well. Once Abdurrahman Khan saw how electricity was used for an explosion on the Salar river. To satisfy the interest aroused in him by this experience, a section on electricity from a school text-book in physics, written by Academician E. H. Lentz (1804-1865), was translated for him from Russian into Persian.

His contacts with Russians notably broadened his outlook. Later, when he returned home, his interest in engineering (primarily when used for military purposes) did not abate. He built an arms factory in Kabul with British aid, and all kinds of workshops. But, being the ruler, he did not promote the new sciences on which technology was based, but patronised merely the teaching of the "old" (divine) sciences.

After Sher Ali Khan had firmly established himself as emir in 1869 and extended his power to the territories which had previously been part of the state of Dost Muhammad Khan, he set about eliminating the consequences of the internecine war. To build up central power, Sher Ali Khan did, above all, need troops and money. To obtain them, he was ready to use outside support and accept aid offered by the British. However, when entering into talks with Britain, he did not waive the sovereignty of Afghanistan but sought to retain its independence in every respect.

Having accepted the invitation of the viceroy of India Mayo to visit the country, Sher Ali Khan met him in Ambala in March 1869. During the talks Sher Ali Khan insisted that the British should stop any interference in the internal affairs of his state and assume obligations "not to recognise in Afghanistan as friends" anyone except the emir and his heirs. But the British limited themselves to a declarative condemnation of internecine wars in Afghanistan, refusing to recognise the right to power for Abdullah Jan whom Sher Ali Khan had appointed as his heir.

On his return from India, Sher Ali Khan set about effecting reforms. He began with taxation and military reforms. The Russian Ambassador to Iran, I. A. Zinovyev, wrote in a report to the Foreign Ministry on August 14, 1869: "To lessen the influence of his bigger vassals, the emir decided to take over control of the country's financial sources and to form a single permanent army."[27] It is known that Sher Ali Khan decided to go over to levying the land tax in money only, giving up taxation in kind. But that decision was never carried out and the tax was levied both in money and in kind, as previously.*

The numerous facts mentioned by those who lived at that period and some objective indices (for instance, the population of Kabul, which was 140,700 in 1876) testify to the comparatively rapid development of Afghanistan and show that it reached a degree of prosperity under Sher Ali

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* According to Dr. I. L. Yavorsky, in Char-vilayet taxes were paid by the population "mostly in kind, i.e. in grain and cattle" (I. L. Yavorsky, op. cit., p. 233).

Khan and that the reforms he effected facilitated economic and cultural advancement. When assessing the situation in Afghanistan in the 1870s, the outstanding modern Afghan historian Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar, even arrived at the conclusion that precisely at that time the conditions were first ripe for the emergence of the "sprouts of capitalist relations".[28] This point of view merits attention. But since the data on the socio-economic relations in the Afghanistan of that time, contained in the sources, have not been analysed, and no monographs have been published on the subject, the question needs a more in-depth study.

Striving for a stronger central power, Sher Ali Khan took measures to improve the administrative system, to set up Afghanistan's first cabinet of ministers, and instituted a deliberative body which was to advise the emir on matters of state administration.

Sher Ali Khan achieved some success in building up the armed forces owing to the fact that Britain had gone over to an openly aggressive policy and there was a danger of a new invasion by British colonialists. By the autumn of 1878 he had increased the numerical strength of the regular troops to 50,000.[29] The army had more than 300 pieces of artillery, although for the most part these were obsolete smooth-bore guns of little military value. A large part of the army was poorly armed and fitted out. The treasury did not have enough money for the army's upkeep, and soldiers often had to seek additional earnings. But, for all that, Sher Ali Khan's army was efficient enough. Later on, many regular officers and men fought excellently against the British aggressors. When he was forming the regular army, Sher Ali Khan ordered that the English service regulations be translated into Pushtu and Persian (Dari).

Special mention should be made of the reforms in education and culture, in particular printing, started by Sher Ali Khan. At that time, lithography was introduced in Kabul, and books and postage stamps began to be printed. Postage stamps with a picture of a lion were issued with a value of one-tenth, a quarter, half of a rupee, and one rupee.[30] The first Afghan newspaper, *Shams an-Nahar*, whose first issue came off the press in 1873, was published up till the start of the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1878-1880. Among the most important and interesting, from the point of view of the history of culture, were the measures effected by Sher Ali Khan in education. Before him Afghanistan had no secular schools, and there existed only two ways of providing children with education: either at home, which very few rich families could afford, or at a madrasah with a traditional religious education according to medieval canons. Sher Ali Khan founded the country's first secular state school in Bala Hissar, which had two departments, military and civilian. English was taught by Indian teachers.[31] Many present-day Afghan historians attach great historical and cultural significance to the reforms effected by Sher Ali Khan in the 1870s, regarding them as the start of the modernisation of Afghanistan.

Under Sher Ali Khan attempts were made to improve communications: roads were built, bridges repaired, and the post service now linked Kabul with Afghanistan's main towns and also with Peshawar. Whereas formerly it was used solely by the emir's administration, now it was also used by private persons.

The construction of arms factories and a new town named Sherabad (or Sherpur) began near Kabul for which an area of 2,000 *jaribs** was allocated in 1870. The official history of Afghanistan contains information on the outer town walls and the internal ones (round the citadel), which the emir had ordered to build, on the number of soldiers employed as building workers, on a pay rise for those soldiers, etc. For more than five years 6,000 workers and about 1,000 skilled builders (for instance, carpenters) were engaged in the construction of the town. The soldiers building the town were paid five rupees in addition to their regular monthly pay, and the skilled builders received daily wages (previously the forced labour of subjects belonging to poll-tax-paying estates had been used in this kind of work).

Sher Ali Khan was aware of the need for a centralised state and for domestic reforms to ensure the country's independent development. He was fairly well informed about developments in Europe, and did, to a certain extent, know the history of the European states and Russia, regarding Peter the Great with much respect.[32]

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* One jarib is equal to 0.2 of a hectare.

The international standing of Afghanistan in the 1870s was determined by the rivalry between Britain and tsarist Russia in the Middle East. In the south it bordered on the colonial empire of Britain, which had seized part of the lands on the right bank of the Indus populated by Afghans; and in the north it bordered on tsarist Russia's Central Asian possessions.

At the end of the 1860s and beginning of the 1870s the British "closed border" policy in the north-west of India gave way to an "offensive policy". This meant that blatant aggression was now the official policy of Britain, which had entered the imperialist stage of capitalist development, and a new war of aggression against Afghanistan thus became imminent. With the coming of the Disraeli cabinet to power in 1874, Britain stepped up preparations for a war with Afghanistan. To camouflage its aggression and mislead public opinion, the British ruling circles in their jingoistic propaganda used the false argument that there existed a threat of India being invaded by Russian troops.[33]

Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gorchakov proposed that Afghanistan be regarded a "neutral zone" between the domains of tsarist Russia in Central Asia and British India. It was envisaged that the independence of Afghanistan would be guaranteed by Russia and Britain. But the British government, which was preparing to attack Afghanistan, refused to offer any such guarantee. In 1873, the tsarist government renounced its former proposal on Afghanistan's neutrality and officially assured the British that it regarded Afghanistan "beyond the field of Russian influence". Under an agreement between Russia and Britain the Amu Darya river was recognised as the northern frontier of Afghanistan.

In the spring of 1878 the tsarist government sent a diplomatic mission to Kabul headed by General Stoletov which was received with great honour.[34] The British government, for its part, demanded that a British mission should be received in Kabul, but Sher Ali Khan refused. Both events were used by Britain as a pretext for starting a war. The British army invaded Afghanistan in November 1878.

The British military command had planned to advance apace and end the war by capturing Kabul. By mid-January 1879 the units of General Browne, moving through the

Khyber Pass, seized Jalalabad. In the south British troops entered Qandahar and occupied part of the area around it.

After that, they marched on Kabul. Force and bribing were the means they used. Some members of the Afghan nobility conspired to bring to power Sher Ali Khan's son Yaqub, who suited the British. Having left the capital to Yaqub, Sher Ali Khan set out to Mazar-i-Sharif on December 13, 1878, with members of the Russian mission who still remained in Afghanistan. The emir still pinned hopes on appealing to international public opinion in order to end Britain's unprovoked aggression. He intended to go to St. Petersburg to convene an international congress on the Afghan issue. But soon after his arrival in Mazar-i-Sharif he fell seriously ill and on February 20, 1879, he died. The Russian mission left Afghanistan.

It was already clear by the outset of 1879 that the British plan for a quick victory was quite unfeasible: the position of the invading forces became critical. But emir Yaqub, who tried to retain the throne with British help, ordered the end of resistance. On May 22, 1879, he was accorded a sumptuous reception in the camp of General Browne. The emir appeared to be compliant and on May 26 concluded the Treaty of Gandamak with the British commissioner Sir Louis Cavagnari, a peace treaty under which Afghanistan did, in fact, lose its independence. A British resident with armed guards was now to stay permanently in Kabul to control the emir's activities and the way he spent annual British subsidies. Yaqub recognised Britain's right to control Sibi, Pishin and the Kurram valley and the Khyber and Michni passes. Prime Minister of the British Tory cabinet Benjamin Disraeli declared that the Treaty of Gandamak ensured a scientifically fixed and adequate frontier for the Indian empire.

Sir Louis Cavagnari, who was appointed the British resident in Afghanistan, arrived in Kabul on July 24. He interfered without scruple in matters of administration, just as in a conquered country. Among the Afghan population and in the army protest was growing against the foreigners and the emir kowtowing to them, and in September 1879 Afghan soldiers started an uprising in Kabul. They were joined by the city population. The insurgents attacked the British residency, killing everyone they found there. The events in Kabul shook the whole country. Tajiks and other peoples, too, rose against the invaders, and volunteer armed units were formed in many areas.

The invaders, who had withdrawn nearly all their armed forces to India after the signing of the Treaty of Gandamak, only held out in Qandahar. Supported by reinforcements from Britain and South Africa, they set out for Kabul again. That expedition was led by General Roberts. Emir Yaqub, who had surrendered to the British, ordered the Kabul garrison to lay down arms. But the soldiers disobeyed him. After fierce battles the British captured the capital in October 1879 and perpetrated severe reprisals against its defenders and population. Many people were detained and executed. The conquerors avenged themselves on the people of Kabul and the city itself. The Bala-Hissar citadel and the residential districts around it were severely damaged.[35] The cultural beginnings of Sher Ali Khan suffered a great reversal. In particular, the equipment of the printing house built during his rule was destroyed, which held up the development of the Afghan press until the early 20th century.

Emir Yaqub was accused by the British of not taking effective measures to aid Sir Louis Cavagnari. In October 1879 General Roberts issued a proclamation informing the people of Afghanistan that Yaqub had abdicated. The dethroned emir was taken under escort to India. Thus the British conquerors, who had alleged that their purpose was to defend the Indian borders and eliminate "the threat of a Russian invasion", betrayed their true intentions. The population of Afghanistan resisted the invaders' attempts to take over the administration of their country. Although the British authorities managed to win the support of some feudal lords by bribing them, the officials appointed by the British from among them to administer some of the country's regions were confronted with popular resentment. Some of the officials were killed, and others fled to the British.

The volunteer units of Afghan tribes and Tajiks from Kohistan, who were most active in the liberation struggle, were led by Afghan General Muhammad Jan Khan Wardak, a capable commander. In the autumn of 1879 he arrived in Ghazni province having persuaded the volunteer detachments of the Wardak tribe to take part in future hostilities. Mullah Din Muhammad, too, called for a sacred war against the British. At that time, he, together with Muhammad Jan Khan and mullah Abdul Ghafur Langari, was getting together the volunteers arriving in Ghazni province.

At the end of November the insurgent units from Ghazni and other regions launched an offensive on Kabul. General Roberts failed to prevent the unification of those units.[36] The decisive battles between the insurgent detachments and the troops commanded by Roberts were fought at mount Koh-i Asmai and culminated in the victory of the Afghans on the approaches to Kabul. General Roberts and his troops were forced to retreat to the Sherpur military camp. On December 15, 1879, the rebel detachments entered Kabul. Popular wrath was also spearheaded against the *sardars* who sided with the British, and their houses in Kabul were looted and burned down.[37] The capital was liberated not only due to the valour of the soldiers who had come from various parts of the country under the banners of Muhammad Jan Khan Wardak, Ghulam Haidar Khan Charhi, and other leaders of the popular uprising, but also due to the active part taken by the population of Kabul and the surrounding areas in the struggle.

The Afghans failed in their further actions against Roberts' troops. The unfavourable balance of forces caused by the arrival of enemy reinforcements forced Muhammad Jan Khan to retreat after some time. He headed for the Maidana valley in the Ghazni area. In January 1880 the British recaptured Bala Hissar, the ruined citadel of Kabul.

At the end of 1879 and the beginning of 1880 the aggressors' position was unstable, in spite of the seizure of Kabul. A popular guerrilla war was still going on. In the long run, the British ruling circles had lost all hope of turning Afghanistan into a colony by force of arms. Planning a withdrawal of the occupation forces, they sought ways of achieving the most favourable outcome to a protracted war that had cost them a good deal of money but held out no hope for the better. Some of Britain's top politicians tended to believe that by putting an obedient emir on the throne and stationing their garrisons in some regions of Afghanistan it was possible to make it a dependent state. Simultaneously, it was planned to break up the country into several domains dependent on Britain.

Having dethroned Yaqub, the British aggressors saw how hard it was to rule an occupied but unsubdued country, and then they remembered about Abdurrahman Khan. When he had set out for home late in 1879, he himself reminded the British of his existence by his actions. At the beginning of the Anglo-Afghan war the Russian tsarist government did not allow Abdurrahman Khan to leave for Afghanistan for it wished its rival, Britain, to lose that war. So it thought that the appearance in Afghanistan of a claimant to the throne, who was dangerous to Sher Ali Khan and also to Yaqub, would cause disarray among the resistance forces and weaken the Afghans fighting the aggressor. But in the autumn of 1879 the situation in Afghanistan had changed; and so had the attitude of the tsarist authorities to Abdurrahman Khan's return. He was allowed to go home.[38]

Having occupied the country, the British extended their control to only part of its territory. They failed to enter Afghan Turkestan, which bordered on Russia's Central Asian domains. The tsarist government preferred to have an independent Afghan state, but not a British colony close by. By facilitating the emergence of a new aspirant on the political scene, it expected Abdurrahman Khan to gain a foothold in Afghan Turkestan and to create an independent domain there. If he became the emir of the whole of Afghanistan, the tsarist authorities hoped to have a friendly neighbour. To give British diplomats no pretext for accusing Russia of interfering in Afghan affairs, they allowed Abdurrahman Khan merely to "escape" unhindered from Tashkent.

As he appeared in Badakhshan, Abdurrahman Khan was pleasant in his treatment of the members of the local nobility who had not yet submitted to him. He received them in a big way, trying to gain their favour. He cajoled the influential persons he needed, and his prestige rose.[39]

His chief rival in the struggle for power in the northern part of the country was Ghulam Haidar Khan Wardak, the Afghan general whom emir Yaqub had appointed his deputy in 1879 in Char-vilayet and who now ruled Mazar-i-Sharif and other towns on the left bank of the Amu Darya. Ghulam Haidar Khan wanted to become the ruler of the whole of Northern Afghanistan and made contact with

Muzaffar, the emir of Bokhara, in order to secure his backing.

General Ghulam Haidar Khan Wardak sent large forces, part of the regular troops he commanded, to Kataghan in a bid to extend his influence to that province and to neighbouring Badakhshan. But the forces he had sent recognised Abdurrahman Khan as their leader and joined him. This instantly changed the situation in the northern provinces in favour of Abdurrahman Khan. Ghulam Haidar Khan fled to Bokhara, where he was killed some time later.

As he gained a foothold in Khanabad, Talikan and Qunduz, Abdurrahman Khan, pursuing a cautious wait-and-see policy and avoiding any move that could cause a conflict with Britain, began negotiations by correspondence with Sir Lepel Griffin, a British political representative who had arrived in Kabul from India.

The British policy-makers were contemplating the division of Afghanistan into "independent domains" under a British protectorate. One of the chief elements of their plan was to find a suitable claimant to the vacant throne in Kabul from among the Afghan nobility. At a durbar held in the Afghan capital on April 13, Sir Lepel Griffin declared that the British troops would leave the country as soon as the Afghan chiefs would agree among themselves on the choice of an emir friendly towards the British government. It was stipulated that the Qandahar region would become an "independent state".[40]

The British policy with regard to Afghanistan was greatly affected by the situation in India. The late 1870s and early 1880s marked a turning point in the history of Britain's largest colony.[41] In those years discontent with the colonial regime was rapidly increasing among various sections of the Indian population. The British authorities wanted to wage the war in Afghanistan at the expense of the peoples of India, increasing the tax burden on the population of that colony. In India rumours were spreading like wildfire about Britain's setbacks. People said that its conflict with Russia was inevitable and predicted Russia's victory in it.[42] Many people in India saw Britain's future defeat as deliverance from colonial domination.

It was at that time, in the spring of 1880, that the troops of Abdurrahman Khan launched an offensive on Kabul from the north, while the volunteer units of Ghazni were approaching the city from the south. That could have created a critical situation for the troops of General Roberts. A detachment of 7,000 was dispatched to Kabul from Qandahar under the command of General Donald Stewart.

But, in spite of this, the general situation in the country was already precarious for the invaders early in the summer of 1880. They failed to maintain control over communications. The reports coming to India from Afghanistan said that Afghan volunteer units up to 20,000 strong were being assembled in Ghazni province. The British government saw the enthronement of Abdurrahman Khan as the most acceptable way out of the deadlock. The British politicians expected Abdurrahman Khan to make great concessions, and this was the case in the long run, although the talks lasted too long.

On June 14, 1880, the British sent their ultimatum terms to Abdurrahman Khan, and on June 16 it became known in Kabul that Abdurrahman was approaching the capital with 2,000 soldiers and 12 field guns. The country on the whole was on his side. According to the Afghan sources of that time, the total number of soldiers supporting him was 300,000.[43] On June 26, Abdurrahman Khan's answer reached Kabul. He said that he should have complete control over the territory which had in the past been ruled by his grandfather Dost Muhammad Khan.

Formally, that answer did not mention Qandahar, although Abdurrahman Khan's claim to that province had been expressed earlier in no uncertain terms. Ignoring the advice of his subordinates to discontinue the talks, viceroy Ripon did not take a hasty decision. In the circumstances, British diplomacy was forced to recognise Abdurrahman Khan as emir. With the assistance of Sir Lepel Griffin, mullah Mushk-i Alam, who enjoyed great prestige in the country and had influence with the other leaders of the "national party" who headed the volunteer units concentrated in Ghazni province, took the side of Abdurrahman Khan.

Agreeing to accept the throne and the capital city from the British, Abdurrahman Khan tried to smooth over, as far as possible, the bad impression that move had made on the population, and on July 20 he proclaimed himself emir in Charicar. On July 22 a durbar was called in Kabul at which the delegates of the Afghan nobility were informed that Queen Victoria had recognised Abdurrahman Khan as the emir of Kabul and that the British troops would soon be withdrawn from his domains. The British handed over the capital to him and supplied him with arms and military equipment and later on began to pay him a large annual subsidy.

During the talks Abdurrahman Khan managed to get Britain's consent to cancel the provision of the Treaty of Gandamak on the presence of a permanent British resident with armed guards in Afghanistan. Instead, there was to be an agent in Kabul from among Indian Muslims for liaison between Abdurrahman Khan and the British authorities in India. But Abdurrahman Khan's pledge to conduct diplomatic talks with other states only through the viceroy of India placed Afghanistan's foreign policy under British control. On the whole, the terms of the agreement with the British were too exacting for Afghanistan.

The emir pledged himself to ensure a safe retreat of the British occupation forces. This left the British command free to act at its own discretion and to use its forces for operations in Qandahar province. The British government, bent on severing the Qandahar province from the Afghan state, made it an "independent domain" headed by sardar Sher Ali Khan Qandahari, its stooge.

As the talks between Abdurrahman Khan and the British on recognising him as emir were entering their last phase, Ayub Khan, the ruler of Herat, moved his troops to Qandahar to drive the invaders out of Afghanistan. With Afghan regular army regiments and several artillery batteries in Herat, Ayub Khan had had a good chance of winning a battle against Abdurrahman Khan when the latter had just appeared in Afghan Turkestan and had not yet assembled a large force. But Ayub Khan did not sacrifice the interests of the state to win in a struggle for power. He gave Abdurrahman Khan an opportunity to act without a hindrance and began to prepare his troops for an offensive on Qandahar.

In response to the request of the Qandahar "ruler" for urgent help for his troops stationed in the Ghirishk region, the British sent a brigade there under the command of General Burrows, part of the occupation forces stationed in Qandahar. The British politicians feared that if the British troops remained inactive in Qandahar, Ayub Khan would launch an offensive on Ghazni. Such a possibility was viewed by the British authorities in India as a threat of a complete failure for their plans in Afghanistan.[44]

With the approach of Ayub Khan, soldiers of the Qandahar "ruler" began to go over to his side. His army was, moreover, replenished by numerous volunteers from among the local population. As a result, the military and political situation in Qandahar province changed drastically against the British. In the battle fought on July 27, 1880, near the village of Maiwand, 55 kilometres from Qandahar, the Afghans led by Ayub Khan won a sweeping victory, having routed a brigade of regular enemy troops. After that, however, the British command managed, with the assistance of Abdurrahman Khan, to move fresh forces to Qandahar from Kabul. With their superior numerical strength and arms, the British defeated Ayub Khan and forced him to retreat to Herat.

The outcome of the battle of Maiwand also decided the fate of Qandahar, for it frustrated the plans of the British colonial policy-makers to tear the city away from Afghanistan. When the invaders clearly saw that the population was implacable with respect to them, they deemed it right to leave the city and, some time later, in April 1881, all of the remaining British troops were withdrawn to India. The British aggressors were compelled to admit that all their efforts to make Afghanistan their colony had been in vain. Only the agreement with Abdurrahman Khan gave them an opportunity to end the hopeless war more or less satisfactorily.

By mid-1881 Abdurrahman Khan had extended his power to the main regions of Afghanistan, except Herat. The new emir was confronted with hard tasks in foreign and domestic policy. The country had been ravaged and exhausted by the war. The treasury was empty. With the central authorities remaining inactive for a long time, local feudal lords plundered the population with impunity in many regions.

In the summer of 1881 battles for Qandahar flared up between Abdurrahman Khan, who ruled in Kabul, and Ayub who still controlled Herat. In July Ayub Khan defeated the troops of Abdurrahman Khan which had captured

Qandahar and occupied it. Then Abdurrahman Khan himself led his army against Ayub Khan and won a decisive battle in September 1881. Ayub Khan retreated to Herat, but early in October 1881 that city, too, was seized by Abdul Quddus, a commander of Abdurrahman Khan's army, after which Ayub Khan left for Iran. He lived in emigration, taking no part in the events in Afghanistan till his death in 1914.

Extending his power to the whole of the country, Abdurrahman Khan defeated guerrilla units and executed many of the popular war leaders who had fought against the British and then against himself after he reconciled himself with the enemy. Some Muslim theologians were executed on the same charges. To guard his power against the descendants of emir Sher Ali Khan, he deported many of their supporters from among the nobility. Having appointed his faithful supporters the rulers of regions and keeping them under his constant control, and having flooded the country with secret spies, Abdurrahman Khan set about consolidating his might in every possible way.

In foreign policy he sought independence for his state, using Anglo-Russian contradictions and in some instances manoeuvring between his strong neighbours, Britain and Russia.

Fearing a war with Russia from the very outset, Abdurrahman Khan was extremely wary in his relations with his northern neighbours, Bokhara, Khiva, and the Turkmens. In 1881-1883 he responded with great caution to the diplomatic moves of those neighbours whenever there was a risk of involving Afghanistan in a conflict with Russia. Towards the end of 1881, for instance, in a reply to a letter from the Khiva khan, in which the latter proposed an alliance against Russia, Abdurrahman Khan, using polite words of gratitude, virtually refused to co-operate. Soon after that, he categorically rejected the request of Mahtum Quli, one of the four khans of Merv, to incorporate Merv (at that time independent) into Afghanistan.[45] Abdurrahman was well aware of the fact that interference in the affairs of Merv might well entail a conflict with Russia.

In 1884-1885 an acute conflict erupted between Britain and Russia over the "Afghan delimitation" issue. The British and Russian governments agreed to draw a borderline between Afghanistan and the Russian domains in Central Asia along the Amu Darya river. But when the actual delimitation was being done, considerable difficulties arose in the regions in the river's upper reaches, for the sides could not agree on which mountain regions should be considered to be located north of the Amu Darya's sources. The disputes were even more acute in the north-western border area of Afghanistan, in the territories lying between Kerki, the point where the Amu Darya turns north, and the regions where the borders of Afghanistan, Iran and Bokhara (Russia's vassal territory) converged, in the lands populated by Turkmenian tribes. The latter did in fact remain independent until 1884 and did not obey the rulers of the neighbouring states.

Under the agreement reached between the British and Russian governments the borderline between Afghanistan and the Russian domains in Central Asia was to be drawn by a Russian and a British commissions set up for the purpose. The British commission, which set out from Baluchistan to Herat early in September 1884, consisted of 1,400 persons (including a large military escort) and looked more like a military expedition than a group of experts sent to achieve a peaceful settlement of border issues.

It was not accidental that the British commission moved from India precisely across the deserts of Baluchistan. The British feared the hostile attitude of the Afghan population, which, as historical experience had proved, could come to the surface even if there was complete understanding between the British and the Afghan emir. Abdurrahman Khan, anticipating the possible complications that might be caused by the arrival of the British commission with a large military escort in Afghanistan, sent detailed instructions on that score to his officials and military commanders in the border regions.

Availing himself of the Anglo-Russian contradictions and the tension existing in relations between the two countries, Abdurrahman Khan sought, with British diplomatic support, to retain as many of the disputed regions as possible for himself during demarcation. But, in so doing, he wanted to avoid a conflict with Russia. The British, on the other hand, were provoking the Afghans to a conflict. An armed clash did occur on March 30, 1885 at the Tash-Kepri bridge between a Russian detachment commanded by General Komarov, stationed in the Murghab valley, and an Afghan unit. The Afghans retreated. The clash, which had in fact been provoked by the British colonialists, was far more detrimental to Britain than had been expected at the outset.[46] The provoked conflict dealt a heavy blow at Britain's prestige, not only in Afghanistan but in a vast area of the Middle East. It was also used as a pretext for fanning warlike sentiment in Britain.

The impression produced by the clash at Tash-Kepri, followed by the bellicose stir it caused in Britain, when it was widely believed that a war between Russia and Britain was inevitable, was long remembered in Europe.[47] The British navy received orders to be in combat readiness. Gladstone clamoured for military credits in Parliament. The situation grew tense. At that time, as noted by Lenin, "Russia was on the verge of war with England over division of the spoils in Central Asia".[48] But the sabre-rattling British government feared a war against Russia in the Middle East for many reasons. For Britain combat in Afghanistan meant the risk of remaining face to face with Russia in the remote parts of Asia. The threat to British rule in India posed by the oppressed peoples of India was among the main reasons for the British government's fear of a war with Russia at the gate of that vast colony. The Russian government, for its part, also had reasons for avoiding a war with Britain and agreed on the settlement of the conflict through diplomatic negotiations.

A significant role was played in the peaceful outcome of the 1885 crisis by the resolute stand taken by Abdurrahman Khan who refused to make any moves that could lead to a war with Russia. His position largely facilitated the Anglo-Russian understanding on the north-western frontier of Afghanistan, formalised in the protocol signed on September 10 (August 29 Old style), 1885, in London. On July 10, 1887, the final protocol was signed, fixing the Russo-Afghan frontier from the Harirud river in the west to the Amu Darya in the east.

Beginning with the late 1880's, after the border issues with Russia were settled, Abdurrahman Khan focussed his attention on the southern frontier. However, there his political ambitions came up against the aggression of British colonialists who were advancing rapidly into regions populated by Pashtuns and Chitrals for the purpose of seizing the strategically important lands of the East Hindu Kush on the approaches to the Pamirs.

Just a few years after the second Anglo-Afghan war the British had already started aggressive action in the north-western region of the border between British India and Afghanistan. Their aim was to seize the Hindu Kush and spread British influence to the Pamirs and the nearby territory. As a result of General Lockhart's mission, a British protectorate was established over Chitral in 1885, and a political agency was instituted in Gilgit two years later. The British aggression in the lands of the tribes in the border regions was conducted by means of military expeditions with the subsequent signing of agreements with the *jirgas* (councils) of the tribes. Beginning with the late 1880's, the British colonial policy-makers, relying on the Peshawar Province, on the one hand, and, on Chitral and Gilgit, which had become dependent on Britain, on the other, launched a vigorous offensive in the north-western region along the border in a bid to establish their rule in the area on the approaches to the Hindu Kush.

In pursuing an active policy with regard to the East Hindu Kush and the neighbouring mountain regions in 1886-1888, Abdurrahman Khan was obstructed by extreme domestic complications in Afghanistan itself: the Ghilzai uprisings and the mutiny of Ishaq Khan, which presented a grave danger to him. Punitive expeditions and incessant military actions in various parts of the country, combined with the emir's efforts to overcome feudal internecine strife, and particularly his policy of ruthless suppression of the discontent among the people and popular movements, were the most salient features in the history of Afghanistan in the 1880's.

In the early years of Abdurrahman Khan's rule there were already bursts of popular protest in various parts of the country.[49] The authorities' arbitrary rule and the burden of taxes sparked off uprisings among the Hazaras.[50] The disturbances assumed extensive proportions in Badakhshan, and rebellions occurred repeatedly in Khost, in particular among the Mangals, and also the Dzadzi and Hasan-Khel and other tribes.[51] The emir's troops had to wage on a protracted struggle against the Shinwari tribe.

Abdurrahman Khan came up against great difficulties in the regions (as in the Shinwari lands), that had not been subject to regular taxation in the past. But difficulties often arose to an equal extent in the regions, first and foremost the Ghilzai lands, where taxes had been small and where the land had not been measured.

The Ghilzai uprising in 1886-1888 was a series of actions, three of them very serious, which shook Abdurrahman Khan's power at different times. One of the chief causes of the Ghilzai armed uprising was that they were taxed under general regulations, in violation of tradition, on a par with most *rayats* in the Afghan state. The Ghilzai tribes, which had carried the brunt of the wars of independence waged by the Afghan people, were still a major military force in the 1880s. In numerical strength they equalled the Durranis, and together with them made up the two most numerous and strongest groups of tribes.

Previously the Ghilzais had to pay comparatively low tributes under a system of fixed quotas. They made fixed payments to their khans, who were trusted completely by the central government in the collection of taxes and the transfer thereof to the treasury. Usually the Ghilzai khans took half of the revenues and handed over the rest to the sovereign of Afghanistan.

The emir made radical changes in the procedure of paying the land tax by the Ghilzais. He introduced the *se kot* taxation system, under which one-third of the harvest from the *nahri* lands, i.e., the lands irrigated by river water, was to be handed over. The Ghilzais now had to pay government taxes as well and various kinds of tributes. In 1881 their outbursts of protest had already led to terror, numerous arrests, assassinations, and executions. The reprisals in 1881-1883 were mainly levelled against the Ghilzai khans and the mullahs.

The abolition of tax privileges, the emir's policy of centralisation, the toughness of his rule, and the harshness of the reprisals made the majority of the Ghilzai nobility the emir's sworn enemies. As for the rank-and-file tribesmen, they were outraged to know that the government was demanding of them much higher taxes than they used to pay before. The Ghilzai chiefs influenced their tribesmen, reminding them of traditions and calling for tribal solidarity in the struggle to eliminate their unequal position and demanded the abolition of the privileges enjoyed by the Durrani nobility.

The popular leader of the insurgent Ghilzais was the mullah Abdul Karim. His father, the mullah Din Muhammad (Mushk-i Alam), had died in 1886 at the age of 96. In the last years of his life his vast landed possessions were taxed for the first time, while the payments received by him and his sons were cancelled by the emir. The abolition of land-tax privileges and the persecution of the leaders of the anti-British struggle and Ghilzai dignitaries made Din Muhammad and his sons rise against Abdurrahman Khan. Ismatullah Ghilzai was arrested in January 1882. The arrested was a close associate of the mullah Din Muhammad who requested his release, but in vain. In October 1882, Ismatullah was hanged. The first major Ghilzai uprising was started by the Andari tribe in the Mukur region in October 1886. The emir's troops could not suppress it, and it continued to spread, involving not only the Ghilzai tribes, but was also supported by the Kakars, the Wazirs, some tribes of Khost and part of the Hazarajat population.

The emir tried to placate the insurgent Ghilzais by promising concessions. He promised that the taxes to be paid by the Ghilzais would not exceed the amount they used to pay under Dost Muhammad Khan, and attested his promise by a seal on the Koran. Abdurrahman Khan also tried to influence the Ghilzai chiefs by appealing to their religious sentiments and pointing out that, as Afghanistan's neighbours were hostile heterodox states, an internal split in the country could do great harm to Islam. But all the promises and the persuasion proved to be of no avail. During the Ghilzai uprising there was a considerable decline in the emir's popularity in the country. So, he did not venture to announce a large-scale appeal for tribal volunteers to suppress the rebels.

However, he managed to improve relations with the Durrani tribes, which largely helped his troops to suppress the uprisings. This was of great political significance, although the feudal volunteer force provided by the Durranis was apparently of little value. The emir exploited the apprehensions of the Durrani feudal lords over their privileges, should their traditional Ghilzai rivals succeed. The position of the emir's troops also improved after the delivery of large amounts of materiel from Qandahar. In the spring of 1887, the emir's troops defeated the Hotaki Ghilzais who had to submit and moved into the lands of the Tarakis, where they were joined by units from Ghazni.

In spite of the victory won in June 1887 over the Tarakis and the heavy losses they suffered, the Ghilzai uprising had still not been suppressed on the whole. The uprising had assumed tremendous proportions, involving other tribes and peoples and might well have spread to the emir's troops. At the end of the spring and the beginning of the summer of 1887 all this created a critical situation in the country. The persistent struggle against the Ghilzais and the other insurgents who backed them ultimately culminated in victory for the emir. On the whole, the troops remained loyal to Abdurrahman Khan. This, and also the superiority in material and military hardware resources of the regular army over the arms, and specifically the equipment and supplies of the insurgent units, which was largely due to the British financial aid and arms deliveries, led to the emir's victory.

The rebellion in the north started in the summer of 1888 by Abdurrahman Khan's cousin Muhammad Ishaq Khan (the hostilities lasted till the end of September 1888), was viewed by the emir as more dangerous to his power than the Ghilzai uprisings. Back in 1880 Muhammad Ishaq Khan had helped Abdurrahman Khan to come to power and was appointed by him the administrator of Afghan Turkestan. His dependence on the emir was evidenced by the regular deliveries of valuable presents to Kabul. From 1884 onwards relations between them changed for the worse after Muhammad Ishaq Khan began to ask the emir to grant him the administration of Afghan Turkestan for life. This made the emir suspiciously alert.

In Afghan Turkestan, where Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmens made up the majority of the population, the people at large lived in extremely hard conditions. Muhammad Ishaq Khan decided to exploit the situation in the province in his own interests. While preparing to become an independent ruler there, he sought popularity by trying to be "nice" to people and making some concessions to them.

He wanted to influence the religious feelings of the people and to show himself to be a zealous Muslim during religious ceremonies, parading his belonging to the Nakshbandiya Dervish Order (he had joined it when in Samarkand), which enjoyed prestige among the local population, particularly among the Turkmens. Ishaq Khan won over to his side the officers and men stationed in Afghan Turkestan by paying them their salaries accurately and regularly, which was something unusual in Afghanistan at that time.

The uprising began on July 30, 1888. On that day Muhammad Ishaq Khan announced the separation of Afghan Turkestan from Afghanistan to the troops and the townsfolk gathered in Mazar-i-Sharif. The civilians and soldiers swore allegiance to him; he put on a gold crown (*taj*). That very day an envoy of Ishaq Khan went to see the commander of the Kerki garrison to inform him of the proclamation of an independent domain "under the patronage of Russia". Then Ghulam Qadir Khan, the official ambassador of Ishaq Khan, arrived in Kerki with generous gifts. The Russian authorities pursued a policy of non-interference. But the tsarist government ordered that the governor-general of Turkestan reinforce the troops along the border with Afghanistan, just in case.[52]

Since there had been no clashes with the emir's main forces before September 1888, Ishaq Khan was getting ready for decisive events. Apart from military measures, he started diplomatic activity in a bid to win over allies among the rulers of the countries and regions adjacent to Afghanistan. He sent out letters urging the rulers of Chitral, Dir, Bajaur, Swat and other areas to come out jointly against Abdurrahman. Generous promises were made, should victory be gained. Availing himself of a brief respite, Muhammad Ishaq Khan occupied towns and villages along the Bamiyan road leading to Kabul and in some other regions. That placed Abdurrahman Khan, who was seriously ill, in a precarious position. Ayub Khan appeared at the border. But developments soon took a different turn.

Abdurrahman Khan's troops launched an offensive on Tash Kurgan. Having joined forces with the units of the emir's deputy in Badakhshan, they fought a decisive battle late in September at the village of Ghaznigak, 30 kilometres south of Tash Kurgan. In spite of their fierce resistance, the rebels were routed. Ishaq Khan with his son and retinue followed by several thousand soldiers fled to Russian Central Asia, where they were given refuge.

To put down popular uprisings and feudal mutinies, Abdurrahman Khan used to set volunteer armed forces of some tribes and peoples against others. Thus, in the struggle against the insurgent Ghilzais in 1886-1888, he used Durrani detachments, and in 1892-1893 the forces of Afghan nomad tribes to quell the Hazara uprisings. Such a policy stirred animosity among tribes and nationalities of Afghanistan for many years to come.

The early 1890s saw fierce rivalry between the Afghan emir and the British colonialists for influence in the strip of land populated by independent tribes along the border between India and Afghanistan. The British seized lands in the southern part of this strip and also in the Kurram and the Khyber Pass regions. But the majority of the independent Afghan tribes offered a stubborn resistance. Their sympathies were with Abdurrahman Khan, for they hoped for the Afghan state's assistance in the struggle against the British aggressors. The religious factor also played quite an important part. The religious-political treatise "Taqwin ud-din" (The Strengthening of Religion) written by a group of ulemas by order of Abdurrahman Khan, and the numerous appeals distributed by the emir's emissaries among the border tribes propagated the teaching on *jihad* and also the religious duty of all Muslims to obey the sovereign of Islam and the zealous adherent of religion—the padishah of Afghanistan. In this way, Abdurrahman Khan established close contacts with many religious leaders of the border tribes.

The British colonial authorities were alarmed by the news of the treaties concluded by the emir with the border tribes and sought an advantageous demarcation of the borderline. But Abdurrahman declined invitations to go to India for talks and refused to receive in Kabul the British mission headed by General Roberts, who was hated in Afghanistan for his outrageous deeds during the second Anglo-Afghan war.

Very soon, however, weak spots became evident in Abdurrahman Khan's border policy. He was faced with considerable difficulties. His attempts to impose taxes on the tribes that tended to recognise his power caused growing dissatisfaction developing into open uprisings. Quite often, the Afghan emir would send his units against the insurgents and his soldiers would mercilessly put down a rebellion. Taking advantage of the weak spots in the border policy of Abdurrahman Khan, the British smuggled their agents in among the malcontents. The agents urged the local population to obey the British authorities and provoked actions against the emir. The tense and unstable situation at home doubtlessly affected the possibilities available to Abdurrahman Khan to resist the British pressure*.

Early in 1892 Abdurrahman Khan intended to work advantageous political changes in Bajaur and Dir and, should he succeed, to annex them to his state. But these plans were obstructed by Umra Khan, the ruler of Jandol and Bajaur, and later Dir, and a conflict with him seemed imminent. However, the British warned the emir that they would regard a clash with Umra Khan as an action against British interests. Abdurrahman had to give up his plans with regard to Bajaur and confirmed as his priority task the seizure of Asmar. At that time the domain of Asmar, which was in vassal dependence on the emir, could easily slip away from him, since Umra Khan had placed his man as the ruler there.

In 1893 the relations between Afghanistan and Britain reached a critical point. The British policy-makers demanded that Abdurrahman Khan should give up the struggle for the territory populated by the independent tribes and stop supporting them in their resistance to British colonial expansion. Abdurrahman Khan began to get his troops ready to repel another British invasion. The war seemed imminent. But this time the British government preferred more cautious diplomatic moves to a policy of ultimatums. It feared serious complications with Russia if there were a war with Afghanistan. It also took into account the power of resistance of the Afghan tribes in the border regions and the sad outcome of the previous invasions of Afghanistan which had set off popular wars against the aggressor. An embassy headed by Sir Mortimer Durand, secretary for foreign affairs in the government of colonial India, was sent to Kabul.

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* The largest Hazara uprisings took place in 1892-1893. In 1893 Abdurrahman Khan had so little hope of victory in Hazarajat that he even contemplated withdrawing his troops from that region and intended to cease all military actions there, that is, to recognise the special status of part of the Hazara territories in the Afghan state.

The period preceding the Durand mission was marked by Britain's extreme diplomatic pressure on Afghanistan, backed by military threats and claims to the territory populated by the "independent" Afghan tribes. In such circumstances, negotiations were held between Abdurrahman Khan and Mortimer Durand.

On November 12, 1893, Abdurrahman Khan was compelled to sign a seven-clause agreement that Durand had drafted. The emir relinquished to the British the greater part of the strip of land populated by the Afghan tribes in the border area and assumed an obligation not to interfere in the affairs of the regions that adjoined British possessions in India, in accordance with the attached map. He renounced his right to Buner, Swat, Dir, Bajaur and the lands of the Afridis, Waziristan, the territory of Biland-Khel, Kurram and the disputed region of Chaman (in which the British had built a railway to Qandahar province of Afghanistan), and other areas. At the talks, however, the emir succeeded in achieving the recognition of his right to possession of the Asmar valley (by that time occupied by his troops) and the Birmal area in Waziristan. Provisions were made for increasing the annual subsidy paid by the British to Abdurrahman Khan from 1,200,000 to 1,800,000 rupees. The agreement included a promise that the British authorities would not obstruct the import of military equipment into Afghanistan.

Under the agreement with Durand, the domains of the Afghan emir included Kafiristan, the area which at that time was under no one's control.

But all these concessions, plus the increased subsidy and the official recognition by the British of Abdurrahman Khan's right to purchase (in India and Europe) weapons and military equipment and to transport them across India were of infinitely smaller significance than the forced recognition of the colonialists' power over the lands populated by the eastern Afghan tribes, and the fact that the new political borderline (the so-called "Durand line") was at variance with the ethnic borderlines not only of the Afghan people as a whole, but of a number of large tribes (the Momands, for instance), which were divided by the "Durand line".

After the conclusion of the agreement, the emir tried to improve the difficult situation without ending the struggle (primarily by pursuing a religious policy) for influence in the border strip populated by Afghan tribes and was in no hurry to send his representatives for the demarcation commissions. Probably Abdurrahman Khan saw the agreement as a temporary forced concession and hoped for an upsurge of the anti-British movement among the eastern Afghan tribes whose lands were to become part of the British colonial domains under the agreement.

In actual fact the very first attempts by the British to advance to the frontiers fixed between their domains in India and Afghanistan along the "Durand line" met with armed resistance on the part of many Afghan tribes. The uprisings were joined to a certain extent by the largest tribes in the border strip. The British insisted that Abdurrahman Khan should send out a description of the agreed borderline to placate the population in those regions. The emir agreed to do so and informed the border tribes of the agreement with Durand. But at the same time his secret agents continued to operate in the border regions which were to be joined to British possessions. Local mullahs who turned for help and instructions to Kabul as before, carried on anti-British propaganda under Muslim slogans. But this time the emir maintained ties with those taking part in the struggle against the British only through his border officials and secret agents who had to answer requests and pass on the advice and instructions of the Afghan emir not on behalf of the government but on their own behalf. Simultaneously, Abdurrahman Khan attempted to influence the British policy-makers and public opinion in Britain by "private" letters to individuals.

The complications that arose in 1894 during the delimitation in the Momand lands developed into a new crisis between Afghanistan and Britain early in 1895 around the events in Chitral. The British colonial policy-makers speeded up the planned offensive operations in the northern part of the strip populated by the eastern Afghan tribes in a bid to establish their domination there and assume complete control over Chitral and then to dictate their own delimitation terms in the north to the intractable Abdurrahman Khan. The British authorities' decision to go over to active offensive operations in the north was followed by their setting up of the Dir, Swat and Chitral Agency in 1895. That administrative and political measure, which was an important step in the history of British colonial aggrandizement along the north-western border of British India, was regarded by the last governor-general of India's north-western border province as more significant than, for instance, the occupation of Quetta and the creation of the province of British Baluchistan.[53] Just as before, the British colonialists justified the new expansion by the need for defence against a non-existent Russian threat.

Those in charge of British colonial policy were bent on occupying the Chitral principality primarily owing to its strategic value. The Chitral *mehtars* (rulers) had already become the vassals of the Kashmir maharajas in 1878 as a result of an agreement concluded to suit the British. The *mehtars* received an annual subsidy and were first under the indirect (through Kashmir representatives), and later direct control. An internecine strife flared up in Chitral in the early 1890s, in which the British and the Afghan emir had their stooges. By the end of 1892 power in Chitral had been seized by Nizam al-Mulk who had British leanings. Enjoying no support among the population, he sought the aid of his patrons, asking them to establish a permanent British mission in Chitral. On January 1, 1895, Nizam al-Mulk was killed. His death was followed by a struggle for power. The new *mehtar*, Amir al-Mulk, also turned to the British for help. The British sent a large force to Chitral from Peshawar under the command of General Low. Before the troops set out on the expedition, a proclamation was issued to the effect that the British government had no intention of violating the tribes' independence. Although the British managed to win the *maliks* (elders) of some tribes over to their side, detachments of the mountain tribes occupied the major mountain passes and offered resistance. Low crossed the lands of the Yusufzais with great difficulty and occupied Chitral which was, just like Dir and Swat, turned into one of the numerous vassal principalities of the British colonial empire.

The last of the big foreign policy issues in the history of Afghanistan at the end of the 19th century, ensuing from contradictions between the British and the Russians was the "Pamirs issue". The clash of interests between tsarist Russia and Britain over the Pamirs became most acute in the late 1880s and early 1890s and was for a few years central to the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. The Pamirs border issues between Britain and Russia were resolved by diplomatic means on February 27, 1894, when the governments of both countries approved the borderline and defined the task of the mixed demarcation commission. In particular, the transfer of the Wakhan Corridor to the Afghan emir was decided.

In July 1895 the members of the demarcation commissions arrived in the Pamirs where they met with representatives of Afghanistan. At the talks that followed the sides signed a document on locating demarcation signs. The official Afghan sources say that the country's representatives, who regarded the work of the commissions with caution, refused to sign the document until relevant instructions had been received from the emir. Late in August 1895 the demarcation work in the east Pamirs was completed. After that, the frontiers in Shugnan were specified, "and all that is located to the south of the border went to Afghanistan and the area that lies to the north went to Russia". On September 11, 1895, the mixed commission signed a demarcation map.[54]

In the summer of 1895, when the Pamir issue had been, on the whole, resolved, Abdurrahman Khan decided to conquer Kafiristan. The conquest of that territory was for the most part completed in 1896.[55] The population was converted to Islam and taxed. Soldiers were billeted and mullahs were sent there. In the remote regions the opposition to the new order and new religion was more pronounced, and old traditions proved more tenacious. A few thousand people fled to Chitral. Many were resettled in various regions of Afghanistan where they remained for a long time.[56] After the Kafirs were converted to Islam, that land was renamed Nuristan ("the land of light", meaning the light of Islamic religion). The conquest heightened the prestige of Abdurrahman Khan among the Muslim population of Afghanistan and outside it. As a "warrior for faith" he acquired new big opportunities to uphold his repute as a Muslim sovereign, a zealous champion of true religion. In 1896, he was given a new honorary title—"ziya al-millat wa-d-din" ("the light of the nation and religion").

* * *

After the settlement of the Pamirs issue and the conquest of the land of the Kafirs, Afghanistan's modern frontiers were finally fixed. By that time, a significant period in the country's history, whose main element was the strengthening of the emir's power and the centralisation of the state, ended in the stabilisation of the absolute monarchy with a despotic form of rule characteristic of Afghanistan at the turn of the century.

In the 1878-1880 war against Britain the peoples of Afghanistan suffered heavy losses, which were followed by the destruction of the productive forces. The cities, handicrafts and trade, and major oases suffered a good deal. Meanwhile, the country's development, hampered by colonialist oppression and forced isolation from the outside world, making it impossible for Afghanistan to cast off the heavy burden of mediaeval survivals, proceeded in difficult conditions. Afghanistan's seclusion did, to some extent, meet the interests of the domestic policy of Abdurrahman Khan who feared the emergence of new trends in the feudal state which could shake his despotic rule. He deliberately obstructed primarily the population's ideological and cultural ties with the outside world, limiting the contacts between his subjects and foreigners to the utmost. Those who left the country without a special permit (*rahdari*) risked death penalty. If someone failed to return to the country after a trip abroad, his relatives were imprisoned and one of them, who had been selected as a "hostage", was executed. Apprehensive of the penetration of British imperialism into the country, the emir was stubbornly opposed to the British plans for building railways in Afghanistan. Only a Muslim could be Britain's diplomatic representative in Kabul (for liaison with the viceroy of India); and even he was kept under the close surveillance of the Afghan police. The emir's subjects, who were known to make acquaintance with the representative, were immediately sent to jail.

At the turn of the century Afghanistan was literally a "forbidden country". Very few Europeans managed to visit it. Sometimes officials went there for a brief period, but each of them had to have special permission from Abdurrahman Khan. Only a few foreign experts, primarily British, who had been invited by the emir himself and were employed for the construction and servicing of an arms factory were permitted to stay there for a longer period.

Abdurrahman Khan set about centralising the state soon after he came to power, taking measures to improve the state apparatus and the administrative and police machinery, concentrating on organising secret police and a far-flung network of secret agents. Reports by military commanders and officials were verified by the information sent over by secret informants who reported on the fulfilment of the emir's orders and instructions in the provinces, on deviations from his directives, and also on cases of disorder, atrocities, corruption, bribery, or embezzlement.

By enforcing harsh measures, the emir guaranteed safety on the caravan routes, cruelly punishing the robbers caught. Those who violated the emir's laws or disobeyed him were punished with extreme severity.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s Abdurrahman Khan set up a ramified administrative and police apparatus, ensuring a more regular inflow of taxes into the treasury. The class character of the emir's domestic policy was manifest in the ruthless suppression of popular uprisings, in which the chief role was played by the peasants. Varying in character, the actions against the emir's power became especially extensive and reached a high degree of intensity in the latter half of the 1880s and in the early 1890s.

To consolidate his position, especially in the early period of his rule, Abdurrahman Khan styled himself a champion of ordinary people's interests and of the tax-payers' rights, and a fighter against arbitrary requisitions. In 1882, having removed the governor of Qandahar, who did not remit the taxes collected to the treasury, the emir ordered that 83,376 rupees be given back to the *rayats* because, he said, this money had been illegally extorted from them by the former governor. Later, he frequently referred to this incident, as showing him to be a fair sovereign who was concerned with the needs of the people. Although one of the main aims of his domestic policy was to ensure the unfailing inflow of taxes in the treasury, the emir did, according to some sources, sometimes reduce taxes for certain sections of the population and shared his tax revenues with influential persons or groups of persons, including Muslim theologians.

Abdurrahman Khan failed to stamp out the power of the tribal nobility, and the tribal khans remained the proponents of the ideas of feudal separatism. He had to reckon with their interests, which made his centralisation measures less effective. He did, however, resort to tough measures, whenever he deemed it necessary, even against the highly privileged Durrani tribes and their khans.

Under Abdurrahman Khan substantial changes occurred in the position of the Afghan tribes, partly because the part played by the nomadic traders (povindas) in the transportation of goods was diminished after the British built railroads to the Khyber and Bolan mountain passes, and the main goods traffic was now along those roads. A growing part was also being taken in trade by Afghan feudal lords and the emir himself, who had monopolised the export and import of the main commodities. The leading merchant in his state, Abdurrahman Khan took measures to encourage the Afghan merchants, seeking to increase their involvement in foreign trade and to limit the number of foreigners who were predominant there. The policy pursued by the emir somewhat heightened the role of the national merchants in the country's trade. He tried to unify weights and measures and to introduce a single monetary system. A mint was built in Kabul where silver and copper coins were minted by machines. These measures did above all benefit the merchants and the feudal lords engaged in trade.

On the whole, Abdurrahman Khan's domestic policy met the interests of that part of the feudal class which, as distinct from the tribal khans (who leaned on the strength of the volunteer guard units they themselves headed), were in constant need of a strong centralised state with an apparatus of violence and coercion to ensure domination over the exploited peasantry. This section of the feudal lords included military commanders, courtiers, and officials who owned land granted to them or their ancestors for the services rendered.

In foreign policy the emir sought to achieve the independence of his state by taking advantage of Anglo-Russian contradictions. Diverting the emir's attention from the struggle for the Afghan-populated border regions and hoping to use Afghanistan in the event of a war with tsarist Russia, Britain encouraged him to expand his land possessions in the north, provided him with arms, helped to build an arsenal in Kabul and increased its subsidies to him. But the emir, minding his own interests, had no intention of going to war with Russia for Britain's sake, and proved to be a cautious and prudent diplomat.

When speaking about Abdurrahman Khan as a historical figure, ruler and person, it is noteworthy that his activities were contradictory. He was an extremely cruel ruler, especially in the last years of his life, remembered in Afghanistan as a merciless tyrant. The outstanding Soviet researcher I. M. Reisner, noting that British aid "came in handy for the energetic emir" during the final subjugation of the outlying regions through "a policy of drastic centralisation", wrote the following about the activities of Abdurrahman Khan:

"Taking advantage of his position as the only intermediary between Afghanistan and the outside world and having superiority in military equipment and a constant inflow of financial aid across the Indian border, the Kabul emir decided to rise to the position of an Afghan sovereign: the feudal chief of independent tribes wished to become a true monarch. The absence of large cities and the poorly developed trading capital deprived young Afghan absolutism of the enlightenment aspect and lessened its historical role. Another obstacle was the extremely motley composition of the various groups of the population making up Afghanistan." Referring to Abdurrahman Khan's autobiography, Reisner writes that the emir "went out of his way to present his activities in the manner of the best examples of 18th-century Europe". But in actual fact he was "not so much a profound reformer as he was a skilful military commander".[57]

The measures effected by the emir facilitated the growth of the cities, promoted trade, involving part of the feudal class in trade activities, and made for the formation of national merchant capital and the home market. By artful manoeuvring he preserved the independence won by the people for the Afghan state.

Many aspects of his activities provided conditions for future development. For instance, when modern machine-tools and mechanisms were installed at the Mashin-khana factory in Kabul, he had to employ and train the first industrial workers. Although these workers could not yet be regarded as hired labour, for they were forced to work, and their status was similar to that of the serfs at the manufactories of pre-reform Russia rather than workers at capitalist-type enterprises.

But the recognition of the objective historical consequences of such aspects of Abdurrahman Khan's activities as the centralisation of the state and the strengthening of the emir's power, achieved by draconian measures, by no means gives reasons for idealising him or his despotic regime. The above-mentioned facts about him clearly show that his foreign and domestic policies were extremely contradictory.

Afghanistan in the Early 20th Century

At the outset of the 20th century Afghanistan was a semi-dependent (semi-colonial) state. When describing the position of such states, Lenin wrote: "The struggle for these semi-dependent countries should have become particularly bitter in the epoch of finance capital when the rest of the world has already been divided up."[58]

The position of Afghanistan somewhat differed from that of most of the Eastern countries of similar status at that time. Though it was subjected to capitalist influence through foreign trade, Afghanistan was not turned into an object of the export of capital. It was not enmeshed in foreign loans, and no foreign concessions existed on its territory. Afghanistan entered the 20th century as a country retaining independence in domestic affairs, but whose sovereignty was limited by prohibitions in the foreign policy sphere. It was still isolated from the world, an underdeveloped country with neither railways nor roads. Just as before, agriculture—crop growing and pasture livestock breeding—was the basic economic activity for the majority of the population. According to the merchants that were arriving in Central Asia from Afghanistan, the most fertile regions "supplying farm produce not only to the local population but also capable of exporting the surplus" were Badakhshan, Qunduz, Charvilayet, Herat, Farah, Qandahar with Ghazni and the valley along the middle reaches of the Kabul river.* Bread was often in short supply in the country. Exports of wheat, barley, flour, etc. to Central Asia from the border regions of North Afghanistan in the years of a good harvest were very small and were evidently effected in the manner of a usual market trade between neighbour regions.

Wheat was the main crop grown in the country. Next in importance and crop area was barley which was the main foodstuff for the population in the mountain regions. Then followed rice.[59]

Due to the natural conditions in the main agricultural regions irrigated farming had long been predominant and in some regions it was the only possible way of cultivation. The water of rivers and springs was used for irrigation. In some regions *kyariz* irrigation was practised. The main agricultural area in the country in the early 20th century was Afghan Turkestan where mainly grain crops were grown on the fertile loess soil. Besides irrigated farming, non-irrigated cultivation was practised on a large scale in the foothills at the oases of Afghan Turkestan. Wheat and barley were grown in those lands, too.

The Herat oasis with its diverse and fairly deep alluvial soil, irrigated from the Harirud, has been known since the Middle Ages. Field crops, orchards, melons and vegetables had been cultivated there for centuries.

The centre of another large oasis irrigated from the river Arghandab was Qandahar. The existence of narrow strips along the river banks with a rather thin layer of rocky soil facilitated fruit growing. On the outskirts of Qandahar fruit and vegetable growing was developing apace. Pomegranate groves stretched along the Arghandab.

Besides, there were large areas of irrigated land in the fairly narrow mountain valleys at heights of 1,400 to 2,600 metres. The soil was cultivated with simple implements, mostly the wooden plough and the *mala*, a levelling board used as a harrow. Threshing was done by driving cattle and other animals over scattered stems with ears of corn. Simple but useful improvements were, however, always being made in those primitive implements.[60] Also the experience accumulated by the local farmers over the ages helped to introduce some improvements into farming production. Various irrigation methods were adapted to the local conditions, the fields were well prepared for sowing, the soil was enriched by natural fertilisers, and proper care was taken of the plants.

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* As a rule, the products were taken primarily to the neighbouring regions.

But, on the whole, because of the unfavourable historical conditions at the beginning of the 20th century, agriculture in Afghanistan was based on manual labour and its output was low. Its development was primarily hampered by socio-economic conditions. Feudal relations were preserved and natural and semi-natural forms of agriculture prevailed.

At the turn of the century cotton growing was developing at a faster rate in the north (and on a smaller scale at the Qandahar oasis) due to the increased cotton exports to India and especially to Russia. Other industrial crops cultivated in the country included oil-bearing plants, mostly flax and sesame (predominantly in the north); in some areas (Badakhshan and Afghan Turkestan) opium poppy-seeds and small quantities of sugar cane (the Jalalabad oasis) were grown.

Apart from farming, pasture livestock breeding remained a major sector of the Afghan economy. Each year nomads from South Afghanistan would drive their cattle to the lush pastures in the north. Badghis had long been famous for its pastures. The vast areas of pastures of Hazarajat promoted the growth of livestock breeding among the local Hazaras and increased the inflow of nomads during seasonal migration.

At the beginning of the 20th century nomad cattle breeding still remained the main section of the economy in some large Afghan tribes. Among the Durrani tribes the nomad cattle breeders were the Nurzais, and among the Ghilzai tribes they were the Suleiman-Khels. There were also Afghan tribes engaged in agriculture and partly in nomad livestock breeding, such as Achakzais among the Durranis.

The nomads' herds consisted mostly of sheep. The wool of white fat-rumped sheep, raised by the Ghilzais, was of very high quality. The Afghans also bred camels (specifically in the Qandahar region), donkeys, zebu, and buffaloes. Horse breeding was relatively poorly developed. In Hazarajat, whose population lived a settled way of life for the most part, cattle were raised and fed on distant pastures, and livestock breeding was of a subsidiary nature. Using the pastures on the mountain slopes, many families would normally move with the herds not far away from their settlements for a summer season and return home in autumn for harvesting. Like Afghans, the Hazara livestock breeders were mainly occupied with sheep and goat breeding.

From the end of the 19th century in the areas populated by the Turkmens, most of whom remained cattle breeders, the astrakhan sheep population had been rapidly increasing with the growth of astrakhan exports.

Cattle breeding was of great significance among the Jamshidis, Firuzkukhs, Taimanis and also part of the Uzbeks. Among the Tajiks it was nearly always subsidiary.

Many of the local industries consisted in processing cattle-breeding products. While the manufacture of cotton fabric output was small, and sheep breeding was given primary attention, the domestic manufacture of various woollen articles became widespread in Afghanistan. Wool was used for making cloth, felt, carpets and many other household items. Afghan nomads busied themselves with making coarse woollen cloth and blankets, with carpet weaving, feltmaking, knitting stockings, weaving lassos, etc. The Hazajarat people were famous for their carpets and high-quality woollen cloth. The majority of the population in Afghanistan wore clothing made from hand-woven Hazara cloth. The people in the mountainous Tajik regions produced woollen cloth used for making robes and carpets. The Uzbeks manufactured coarse woollen cloth, carpets and bags. Qandahar was famous for its felt outdoor clothing. Although the processing of hides and pelts, the curing and making of leather articles were done within the framework of rural production, quite a few urban craftsmen were doing this type of work as well.

The manufacture of cotton fabrics was less developed in

Afghanistan. Homespun fabric (*karbas*) was produced on a large scale, specifically in the Tajik mountain regions. It was used only by the poorest sections of the population. Uzbek weavers made simple but hard-wearing cotton fabric (*alacha* and *mata*). In some parts of the country the domestic silk industry existed. The centre of domestic crafts in Afghanistan was Kabul, followed by Qandahar.

The traditions of medieval guild production played a considerable part in the life of the craftsmen. City craftsmen of a common trade occupied whole districts or rows in a bazaar. In Qandahar, for instance, north of the Herat bazaar, there lived trunk makers and opposite to them tailors and shoemakers. There was a bazaar in Kabul where copper household articles were not only sold but made. The best craftsmen in Kabul were coppersmiths and also wood carvers and jewellers. The main handicrafts in Quandahar were the making of felt clothes and other felt articles and silk processing. Qandahar craftsmen were famous for embroidering felt clothes with silk, mostly for the rich. Turkmenian and Herat carpets were widely popular.

The conditions in which most ordinary craftsmen worked were appalling. They worked hard from morning till night in the workshops owned by rich Kabul merchants. These workshops were usually located in low semi-basement rooms, below the bazaar shops.

Early in the 20th century the economic and cultural development of Afghanistan was going ahead in difficult conditions. The political situation grew more stable after the normalisation of the situation on the border with Russia. But, at the same time, after the 1893 agreement with Britain the border with British India became a seat of incessant conflicts. Military operations against the British invaders hardly ever ended in the lands of the border Afghan (Pashtun) tribes and disrupted the traditional commercial ties with India, although that country was the biggest partner in Afghanistan's foreign trade.

The political and economic circumstances of that time made the emir broaden contacts with Russia, even if only in trade, the only form of relations that would not evoke an immediate conflict with Britain. In 1898-1900, Abdurrahman Khan tended more than before to expand trade with Russia and Bokhara. For that reason, he reduced customs duties on imports of Russian sugar and textiles.[61] The Russian authorities and trade and industrial firms, for their part, rendered considerable assistance in promoting the participation of Afghans in trade between Russia and Afghanistan.

As he was seriously ill, the emir began to prepare his elder son, Habibullah Khan, for ascension to the throne, wishing thus to avert the internecine struggle for power that had flared up so frequently in Afghanistan after the death of a ruler. Abdurrahman Khan handed down to him the leadership of the major departments and granted him the right to remove and appoint civilian and military officials, so that, once on the throne, Habibullah Khan could have the support of the army and immediately take power into his hands.

Abdurrahman Khan died on October 1, 1901. His death was concealed from the population until October 3, the day when Habibullah Khan was solemnly proclaimed the emir and received an oath of allegiance from the members of the ruling family and also from other influential persons and "ordinary men" who were present in Kabul. Habibullah Khan informed the viceroy of India of his ascension to the throne in a letter, in which he declared his intention to follow in his father's footsteps and promised to be "the friend of his friends" and never to side with his enemies. The viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, immediately tried to wring from the new emir additional concessions limiting the country's sovereignty still more. Using the exchange of letters on the revision of the Anglo-Afghan agreements, which had just started, Curzon thought it advantageous to interpret them as treaties concluded personally with Abdurrahman Khan which therefore had to be resumed after his death. He informed Habibullah Khan that they could be resumed only after discussion and settlement of the questions hampering Anglo-Afghan relations.

Lord Curzon invited Habibullah Khan to meet him in Peshawar in the spring of 1902. The latter refused, saying in a reply to the invitation that there were no disputable issues and therefore there was no need for additions to be made to the agreements signed by Abdurrahman Khan. The second invitation in June 1902 received no response from him at all.

The situation was unstable in Afghanistan in the early years of Habibullah Khan's rule, and his power was not well established. In 1902, the country was hit by a drought followed up by famine. Then a cholera epidemic broke out. In 1903, the Durranis and the Ghilzais protested against the obligation to provide one soldier from every eight persons capable of carrying weapons. The emir made some concessions for the Afghan tribes.

At the start of the 20th century the British and Russian press carried frequent reports about Russia's intention to establish relations with Afghanistan by way of exchanging trade representatives.[62] But British diplomacy worked to prevent Afghanistan from breaking out of isolation. All attempts to establish direct Russo-Afghan contacts between the frontier authorities and to exchange trade representatives between Russia and Afghanistan proved futile.

The British authorities conducted military preparations, building up and reorganising the colonial army and constructing railways in North India, and were getting ready to continue their construction in Afghanistan in the event of a war breaking out between Britain and Russia. It is known that in April 1904 the British negotiated with Habibullah Khan the "ceding" of Kunar to Britain for the construction of a railway along the Kunar river up to the Russian frontier.[63]

The international situation at the time (the setbacks experienced by tsarist Russia in the war against Japan) made it easier for British diplomacy to conduct large-scale activities in the Middle East. Trying to exploit that situation for bolstering up their positions in Afghanistan, the British sent a mission led by Sir Louis Dane to Kabul for the purpose of signing a new treaty. Dane was instructed to ensure the preservation of complete control over Afghanistan's foreign policy by the British government and obtain the emir's consent to construct railways in his territory linking his domains with India. According to the press, Dane's mission also raised the question of extending Indian telegraph lines across Afghanistan and granting to British nationals the right to enter the country. Dane evidently demanded replacement of the agent from among Indian Muslims at the court by an official embassy as well. There are reasons to believe that Dane tried to get the emir's permission for British military engineers to arrive in the country to supervise the building of fortifications along the Afghan-Russian border.

To accept those demands would have meant allowing greatly increased penetration of British imperialism into Afghanistan and would have furnished the conditions to turn the latter entirely into a British colony. Dane brought to Kabul a draft treaty elaborated by Curzon. Habibullah Khan rejected it and expressed his intense dissatisfaction with the article providing for the limitation of arms deliveries to Afghanistan.

The talks, which lasted from the end of 1904 till March 1905, often ran into an impasse. On January 1, 1905, Habibullah Khan proposed his own draft treaty providing merely for extending the term of the agreements, signed previously by Abdurrahman Khan, till the end of his rule. The draft was rejected by the colonial authorities of India. But in Britain the advocates of a more cautious policy, who thought it unwise to risk a war, got the upper hand. The British government decided to accept Habibullah Khan's version of the treaty, and it was signed in Kabul on March 21, 1905.

Habibullah Khan's pride was satisfied to a certain extent by the recognition of his royal title. In the treaty he was addressed as His Majesty Siraj al-Millat-Wa-d-Din Emir Habibullah Khan, the Independent King of the Afghan State. The world "independent" did not of course mean that the British government had granted genuine independence to Afghanistan, which was still deprived of the basic right of a sovereign state—the right to have independent diplomatic contacts with other countries. The acceptance by Habibullah Khan of the obligations entered into with Britain by his father maintained British control over Afghanistan's foreign policy. The new emir was rewarded by receiving the same subsidy that had been granted to Abdurrahman Khan.

Early in 1907, having accepted the invitation of viceroy Minto, Habibullah Khan made a trip to India. The Anglo-Indian colonial authorities gave a spectacular reception for the Afghan emir. He was presented the highest British awards, visited warships in Bombay, hunted tigers in the domain of the maharaja of Gwalior, visited factories, museums, etc. in

Calcutta and other cities. The emir took special interest in military affairs. During his trips to military camps he examined artillery guns, watched the functioning of wireless telegraph, and even got into the gondola of a balloon. Back in Afghanistan, he repeatedly stressed in his public speeches the need for military and technical improvements and the modernisation of the army, thus urging recognition of the pressing need for various reforms in the country.

Although Anglo-Russian relations remained tense in the early 20th century, there were signs of a coming change in Britain's policy, caused primarily by its greatly increased rivalry with Germany. Preparing a large-scale offensive against Britain in the East, German imperialism had turned its gaze not only on Iran but also on Afghanistan, seeing it as the gate to India. German firms were selling artillery samples to the Afghan emir, according to which it was supposed to modernise arms manufacture at the Mashin-khana factory in Kabul.

The Baghdad railway, too, served the purpose of German imperialism's penetration into Mesopotamia. The British political leaders had to reckon with the prospect of the emergence in the Persian Gulf of German warships moored in German-built docks, and with the threat of the Baghdad railway being used by the Hohenzollern army. This impelled some British statesmen to demand a revision of Middle East policy. By 1906 the penetration of German imperialists into the Middle East and Iran intensified; and their economic onslaught was conducted in the same direction. The acute aggravation of contradictions between Britain and Germany, the revolution in Iran and the growing liberation movement in India created a new situation, which induced the British ruling circles to seek rapprochement with Russia.

For some time, the tsarist government pursued a wait-and-see policy with regard to the intentions of British diplomacy. But in the spring of 1906 it began to be inclined to reach an agreement with Britain. That turnabout was motivated by the desire to obtain from France and Britain the loans so badly needed for propping up the tsarist regime enfeebled by the defeat in the war against Japan and the 1905 revolution in Russia. Entering into talks with Britain, tsarist diplomacy was prepared to forego its former position with regard to Afghanistan in return for British assistance in the straits issue and in the Balkan policy. But, in making concessions to Britain on major political issues concerning Afghanistan, tsarist diplomacy sought easier opportunities for developing Russo-Afghan trade.

This is how Lenin characterised the essence of the agreement between Britain and Russia on the division of the spheres of influence, which had been signed on August 31 (18 Old Style), 1907: "divide Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet (preparing for war against Germany)".[64] Five articles in the agreement concerned Afghanistan. Article 1 expressed the previous formula of recognising Afghanistan as a country lying outside of the sphere of Russian influence. Previously, however, tsarist diplomacy had never mentioned preventing the Afghan emir from establishing relations with other states, whereas now it pledged itself "to use the mediation of the government of His British Majesty in all its political relations with Afghanistan". The tsarist government also agreed "not to send any agents to Afghanistan".[65]

In Article 2 the British government pledged itself neither to annex, nor occupy any part of Afghanistan and not to interfere in the internal administration of that country. This hypocritical statement by the British government, which rejected in its secret talks with Russia in 1907 any idea of limiting its freedom of action with regard to Afghanistan,[66] was followed by a reservation that the Afghan emir had to fulfil his obligation to the British government as a condition of exercising the British commitment registered in that article.

Article 3 stated that direct contacts were not prohibited for Russian and Afghan officials on the border and in the border areas for the purpose of settling non-political local disputes. Article 4 recognised the principle of Britain's and Russia's equality in trade in Afghanistan and said that in the event the growth of trade would require Russian commercial agents in Afghanistan, the British and Russian governments would agree between themselves on appropriate measures to be taken. In Article 5 the coming into force of the agreement with regard to Afghanistan was made conditional on the approval of the relevant articles by the Afghan emir.

The viceroy of India informed Habibullah Khan of the articles in the agreement that concerned Afghanistan in a letter dated September 10, 1907. In his reply the emir said that the State Council regarded the agreement as disadvantageous to Afghanistan and as violating its independence. Then he rejected the agreement in a public statement. The emir had to reckon with the negative attitude to the agreement in the country, at any rate with the fact that in the ruling circles it was regarded as a humiliating document detrimental to the country's independence.

The rejection of the agreement by Habibullah Khan and his policy in the subsequent period reduced the trade equality of the sides to nil and also the prospect of "direct contacts" between the border authorities, and the admission of Russian commercial agents into Afghanistan—the provision haggled over by the tsarist diplomats from the British. Afghanistan still remained a "forbidden country", above all for Russia.

The 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement weakened the positions of Afghanistan, for its foreign political situation was now far worse than in the preceding years, which diminished the prospects for regaining its sovereignty. The possibility of exploiting Anglo-Russian contradictions, as it had been done by Abdurrahman Khan, was now reduced to a minimum. In these conditions Habibullah Khan continued the policy of keeping the country isolated which had been pursued by his father. Europeans were not allowed into Afghanistan without the emir's permission, which was given on very rare occasions.

Almost one-third of the population of Afghanistan, which was under the despotic rule of the emir, consisted of nomads or semi-nomads, and feudal relations, archaic in the 20th century, still persisted. At the same time, depending on Britain in terms of foreign policy, the emir was becoming increasingly dependent on it economically. Exporting raw materials and importing industrial goods, Afghanistan was gradually becoming an agrarian and raw-material appendage of the capitalist world. Forced isolation and the heavy burden of medieval survivals acted as a brake on the country's economic and cultural development. The peasants were a tax-paying class which had to pay land and other taxes to the emir's treasury. The taxes were largely, or even primarily levied in kind. The peasants suffered from the severe arbitrary rule and extortion by the officials who had farmed out the right to levy taxes, which was widely practised in the country. The officials in charge of tax collecting kept the peasants under strict control; a peasant could not use the gathered crops, under the threat of strict punishment, until he paid his tax.

During Habibullah Khan's rule people had to pay numerous taxes, as, for instance, the funeral tax or the wedding tax, on top of the grain and livestock they had to give away as *maliat* and *zakat*—the main taxes. Forced labour was used in clearing state-owned irrigation ditches, in the maintenance and building of roads, bridges, etc.[67] The peasants' condition was especially hard in the northern and central parts of the country conquered by the Afghan emirs, such as Afghan Turkestan, and Hazarajat. In Afghan Turkestan vast territories were owned as a domain personally by Habibullah Khan; part of these lands was given out to the Afghan nobility.

The circumstances of the overtaxed livestock breeders were none the easier. Just like the settled peasants, many of them suffered from both the development of the monetary economy, followed by the penetration of commercial and usurious capital into the countryside, and from the erosion of the natural economy. Many peasants were ruined and became landless. Property inequality became much more marked among nomads, and many of the poor livestock breeders went to work as herdsmen for the rich.

Afghanistan had no factories except a few state-owned enterprises; manufactured consumer goods were imported. The economy depended heavily on foreign trade, in which India occupied the leading place. The British imperialists used that trade, and the Indian capital invested in it, for the expansion of their influence in Afghanistan.

The country mainly exported the products of sheep breeding—astrakhan skins and sheep wool. In 1913-1914 exports of wool and astrakhan accounted for nearly half the country's total exports to Britain (India) and Russia.[68] Habibullah Khan retained the monopoly of astrakhan exports, which had been introduced by Abdurrahman Khan. By the beginning of World War I the astrakhan sheep population in Afghanistan exceeded one million.[69] Habibullah Khan conducted wholesale trade in other goods as well, spending a large part of the British subsidy on commercial purchases from India.

At the beginning of his rule, Habibullah Khan effected several measures to strengthen the positions of the national merchants. But home trade was developing slowly. While the natural and semi-natural forms of economy persisted, the medieval system of levying taxes in kind was preserved, hampering the growth of commodity-money relations. Nevertheless, major changes were setting in, although slowly: the cities were growing, trade and handicrafts were developing, in some regions the irrigation network was expanding, the landlords now had stronger ties with the market, local merchants were playing a bigger part in large-scale trade, and a national commercial bourgeoisie was taking shape. These changes had been facilitated by political consolidation, the increasing specialisation of agriculture, and the shaping of the home market.

Up-to-date machinery was imported, although in small amounts. The construction of the telephone line between Kabul and Jalalabad in 1909-1910 marked the first step in the development of modern communications. A few small power stations were built and the decision was taken to build a hydroelectric power station in Jabal Os-Saraj (60 kilometres from Kabul) to supply electricity to several new factory-type state-owned enterprises. The equipment and materials for the first Afghan hydroelectric power station were imported primarily from the United States and the project was supervised by an American engineer. The construction began in 1907, and it was only completed in 1919.

In 1903 a state-owned tanning and shoe-making factory was commissioned in Kabul. Its output went almost entirely to the Afghan army. By 1917 a Kabul cloth mill was built. The history of its construction shows very well what difficulties Afghanistan was confronted with when it came to the building of industrial enterprises. Apart from the high cost of industrial equipment, its delivery by primitive transportation means in the mountainous country, which was short of good roads, was extremely expensive. It took five years just to erect the shell of the mill building for lack of construction materials and their delayed delivery, as they had to be brought from remote regions. The machines for the Kabul cloth mill cost slightly more than 80,000 dollars, while their delivery cost 240,000 dollars.[70]

The economic effect of the first steps in building up Afghan industry was very modest. Besides, if the new technology and machines were to be mastered, even though their imports were extremely limited, there had to be qualified specialists with at least basic modern training behind them. The need for scientific and technical improvements in the army made it abundantly clear to the emir and his retinue that the army needed capable and educated officers. In other words, the attempts to modernise the Afghan state at the beginning of the 20th century were a necessity arising from life itself. Initially, these attempts were confined to technical borrowings in armaments. The mastering of foreign innovations in palace life, started way back under Abdurrahman Khan, was spreading. That was followed by more important innovations in education.

The outward Europeanisation of the emir's court was limited to copying some elements of etiquette, to replenishing the emir's cuisine with some Western dishes, and to Habibullah Khan's wearing a European uniform or tails at receptions and certain ceremonies, which caused a change in the clothes worn by high officials. Court activities now included golf, tennis, and cricket. The emir and his retinue began to use American fountain pens, and court clerks began to use typewriters. Habibullah Khan was fond of taking a drive and by the beginning of World War I he had 58 cars of different types for personal use.

The novelties in the daily life at court, and purchases of foreign curiosities, chosen by Habibullah Khan from illustrated catalogues of European and American firms and ordered through Bombay trade agents, remained, as a rule, within the palaces and were the privilege of the emir and the few people close to him. Those novelties had no meaningful influence on the life of the people, or even on the life of the ruling class as a whole. Displaying great interest in machines and equipment (military above all), the emir, nevertheless, invariably believed orthodox Islam to be the chief instrument of his rule. He admitted, however, the need to update the education system and to study modern sciences to a certain extent to preserve his state and strengthen his power. Whereas he remained a typical Oriental despot, he assented to this, responding to the call of the times, but seeking to preserve intact the feudal foundations of society and thoroughly avoiding any political or socio-economic reforms, limited as they might be.

And yet the founding of the state civilian Habibiya College in 1903 and of the Harbiya officers' college by 1909 marked the beginning of the emergence of a new Afghan intelligentsia (though not numerous at the start) which received modern education in a varying degree. This considerably promoted cultural development and the spread of new ideas in the country. The Habibiya College, the first secular educational establishment in Afghanistan in the 20th century, was a 12-year secondary general education school similar to the Anglo-Indian colleges. It was meant for training officials. Almost all the pupils, aged between 12 and 40, came from the nobility. The actual length of training usually exceeded 12 years,[71] and only a few managed to go through to the end.

The college was headed by Dr. Abdul Ghani, an Indian Muslim who had been in the emir's service since 1895.[72] Most of the teachers were Afghans or Indian Muslims; some of the subjects were taught by Turks. The curriculum was drawn up after the pattern of the general education schools of British India for the Muslim population and included both the traditional religious subjects and the disciplines taught at European schools.

The curriculum for primary education included the fundamentals of the Muslim religion, the Farsi language, arithmetic, geography, and calligraphy. At the second stage the students continued to study the Muslim religion, geography, Farsi and Pushtu, and also history, one foreign language (English, Urdu, or Turkish), drawing, book-keeping, and hygiene and sanitation. At the third stage, they learned theology, Farsi and literature in that language, history, geography, algebra, trigonometry, analytical geometry, mechanics, natural history, chemistry, and English.[73]

The Harbiya military school had two stages: primary (general educational) and special (military). Its curriculum included the Koran, calligraphy, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, grammar, the history of Islam, general history, a number of military subjects, gymnastics, and drill. The main military subjects at the college were taught by Turkish officers. But there were also Afghan teachers, including the enlightener Mahmud Beg Tarzi.

The opening of the Habibiya College, a major step in creating an up-to-date educational system in Afghanistan, was of great historical and cultural significance. The average number of students attending the college was between 250 and 270. The military school initially had 150 students, but by the end of Habibullah Khan's rule the number had reached 900.[74]

At the same time, an attempt was made to partially modernise education at the traditional Muslim schools as well, although all the schools set up for the purpose in Kabul (there were 60 of them in the city) functioned at mosques which means they had not yet been made secular. The new primary schools provided education for nearly 5,000 pupils over a period of five years. Although the modernisation campaign was conducted on a relatively small scale and suffered from a number of drawbacks, its positive effect at the beginning of the 20th century soon became obvious.

Besides, the expansion of publishing, the introduction of printing with movable type by the typesetting method and the improvement of printing machinery was doubtlessly of great cultural value. A "special" printing house with up-to-date equipment was founded in 1911-1912 (named after Inayatullah Khan, the emir's eldest son). This provided conditions for the considerable technical improvement of the publishing industry in Afghanistan, where the quality of lithographic printing had previously been very poor.

The innovations in education and publishing made it possible to boost the dissemination of modern progressive ideas. An important part in this process was played by the Indian Muslims, invited to work as teachers, who were connected with the national liberation movement in their country. Apart from teachers, there were several technicians and gunsmiths working in Kabul. A number of revolutionary émigrés from India had also been given refuge there. The influence of the liberation movement in neighbouring India on the development of national ideology, bourgeois as it was in its orientation, was doubtlessly great. But, while admitting this, account should be taken of the role of the new ideas coming from Turkey and Iran in the years of Asia's awakening. Apart from the Indian community, there was a small but influential Turkish community in Kabul, mostly teachers at the officers' school.

Afghanistan's isolation from the outside world was not total at the beginning of the 20th century. Relations between the population of Afghanistan and Iran were far from being discontinued and, in spite of the absence of permanent high-level diplomatic relations, the traditional neighbourly Afghan-Iranian trade and cultural ties were maintained even during the Iranian revolution. This was a source of great concern to the Afghan authorities, particularly in the Herat province, who feared the influence of the revolutionary developments in Iran and took measures to close the border, prevent the smuggling in of Iranian newspapers etc.[75] But, despite all the restrictions and bans, news of the revolutionary events in Iran kept coming in across the Western border,which inevitably made an impact on the internal situation in Afghanistan.

At the beginning of the 20th century a movement for change and reform emerged in the country, and popular unrest was widespread. In some regions disturbances took place among the peasants. The popular movements, above all in the areas populated by Afghan tribes, were acquiring an anti-British thrust, which increased after the signing of the 1905 Anglo-Afghan agreement, and especially after the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907. The spread of national consciousness and the liberation drive created a favourable climate for the ideas evoked by the epoch of awakening in Asia and the dissemination of these ideas under the impact of the Russian revolution of 1905. They were filtering into Afghanistan not only from Iran and British India, but also from Central Asia, which was directly influenced by the revolutionary events of 1905-1907, and from Turkey as well.

But the conditions in Afghanistan did not favour the growth of a mass revolutionary movement on a broad scale, as was the case in neighbouring Iran. On the other hand, there, too, the ideas of struggle for the renovation of the existing system were taking root. The champions of these ideas called for the adoption of a constitution and for a struggle against British imperialists, for independence. The Habibiya College, where the best Afghan intellectuals and Indian teachers worked, became a centre of the first secret organisation whose goal was to achieve reforms and the adoption of a constitution in Afghanistan. Evidently the first group of that organisation was set up in Kabul at the end of 1906. The first proponents of the liberation ideas in the 20th century are called Old Constitutionalists in Afghanistan.

Among those who set up this organisation was Dr. Abdul Ghani, who probably headed it at the initial stages. Subsequently, it was headed by Afghans (Muhammad Sarwar Qandahari and others). The members of the first organisation of constitutionalists called for winning complete independence for Afghanistan, for carrying through domestic reforms, in particular, for introducing constitutional rule in the country. Some of them were in favour of a republican form of government.[76] Probably the most determined among them expected to achieve their aims through a plot and a coup.

However the organisation was betrayed by the emir's agents who had infiltrated it. In March 1909 the members of the organisation were arrested. Naib Khan, head of the sleuths and sneaks, and Mirza Muhammad Husayn, the chief of the Kabul police who also supervised the prisons of Kabul, presented to Habibullah Khan the activities of the organisation as an extremely dangerous plot aimed primarily against the emir. As evidenced by Abdul Ghani, Mirza Muhammad Husayn insisted on the death sentence for all the constitutionalists, alleging that they had been linked with an international revolutionary movement in Russia, Turkestan and Persia.[77] Seven members of the group were executed, and about 60, including Abdul Ghani, were sent to prison. The list of the active participants in the constitutionalist movement, subjected to reprisals in 1909, and some information about them are given in the book *Afghanistan dar Masir-i tarikh* by Afghan historian Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar. He says that, apart from the educated persons from among the Afghan nobility (they were in the majority), taking part in the movement were two Kabul watch-makers and a filing clerk, employed at court, that is, not dignitaries.

The punitive actions by the emir were not limited to the arrest of the Kabul Old Constitutionalists; reprisals were levelled against all those who were suspected of taking part in the reform movement, and not only in Kabul and Jalalabad but also in Herat and Qandahar. The emir feared the spread of reformatory and revolutionary ideas in the army, which is shown by the threatening orders sent to the garrisons.

The members of the new Young Afghan movement of the subsequent period were for the most part educated people from among the Afghan nobility, there was also a relatively small number of people from among the new intelligentsia of Afghanistan, progressive army officers, and merchants. Though they set themselves the aim of winning the country's independence, they were isolated from the masses. They insisted on a more radical modernisation of the state, on turning it into a constitutional monarchy, and wanted reforms that could not be carried out effectively owing to the medieval survivals. Although such reforms were in keeping with the vital interests of the whole population, their carrying out "from above" could benefit, above all, the merchants and the landowners linked with commercial farming. Objectively, it was mainly their interests that were expressed by the Young Afghans, who pinned much hope on young prince Amanullah Khan, the emir's third son.

After the suppression of the Old Constitutionalists, the ideological leader of the Young Afghans was Mahmud Beg Tarzi (1865-1933). He greatly influenced the views of prince Amanullah Khan who had married his daughter Suraya.

Mahmud Tarzi was a descendant of the Qandahar branch of the Barakzai family of the Muhammadzais, to which the ruling dynasty also belonged. His father, Ghulam Muhammad Khan, was a famous poet and was gifted in other arts. He wrote his poetry under the pen name of Tarzi (meaning one well versed in style). Later, Mahmud began to use this name, too. In 1881 or 1882, soon after Abdurrahman Khan came to power, Ghulam Muhammad Khan Tarzi, who shared the lot of many of his eminent countrymen, was subjected to reprisals by the new emir and was banished from Afghanistan together with his family. He went to India and from there to Turkey, and visited Baghdad and Istanbul. Sultan Abdul Hamid II allowed him to reside in Damascus, and he lived in Syria till his death in 1900.

Mahmud Tarzi lived in Syria nearly 18 years, he spent his youth and received education there. He learned the Turkish and Arabic languages. He studied the Persian language and Persian literature under the guidance of his father and began to write verses at an early age, showing a talent for poetry. The young poet studied new Turkish literature and progressive ideas and turned to civic and social subjects. He refused to follow the fettering traditions, in accordance with which the depth of meaning was often sacrificed to sophisticated style. He was also attracted by the literature of the West (he read European authors in Turkish translation).

Perceiving new ideas from books and from meetings with people and having broadened his outlook (he travelled a good deal), Mahmud Tarzi decided to devote his life to the struggle for the independence of his country and for its renovation. He had already begun writing when still abroad, but found it practically impossible to get his writings published there. Only upon his return to Afghanistan was he able to have his works published. Mahmud Tarzi also worked much as a journalist.

He returned from emigration in 1905, at the invitation of Habibullah Khan. The emir was greatly impressed by Mahmud Tarzi's knowledge and broad outlook, and by his patriotic conviction that the country needed reforms to gain strength and achieve prosperity. Soon Tarzi was appointed the head of the translation bureau, whose main job was to inform the emir of events taking place in Muslim countries and in Europe.

Later on Tarzi worked as a writer, publicist, translator, teacher and educator, and was a herald of modern knowledge and sciences, an ardent proponent of enlightenment and a champion of the struggle for Afghanistan's liberation. In his noble enlightenment efforts an important part was played by the newspaper *Siraj al-Akhbar-i Afghaniya*, edited by him and issued from October 1911 to December 1918. Mahmud Tarzi not only was its permanent editor but also wrote numerous interesting articles on various subjects for it. The numerous translations published in the paper, in particular of 19th-century French fiction, were also made by him.

Apart from this, writings by Mahmud Tarzi and his numerous translations came out in separate editions. Of his translations published by 1917 most noteworthy are a number of novels by Jules Verne (*Cinq semaines en ballon, Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, and others). Those adventure stories not only told Afghan readers about the advances in science and engineering in the 19th century, which was of great educational significance, but also gave them an idea of the views of progressive French intellectuals of the left-wing, socialist trend.

Among the works by Mahmud Tarzi there are *The Garden of Maxims, Miscellany, A Collection of Poems, Refinement in the Arts. A Journey in 29 Days on Three Continents, Asia, Europe and Africa,* works of fiction, scientific and publicist writings in prose and verse, as well as many separate poems and articles published in periodicals, all in all more than 500.

The first printed newspaper in Afghanistan in the 20th century was *Siraj al-Akhbar-i Afghanistan*, whose only issue came out in 1905. Five years later, in October 1911, Mahmud Tarzi began to publish *Siraj al-Akhbar-i Afghaniya.* In the editorial to its first issue Mahmud Tarzi set forth the paper's programme and the editor's opinion on the noble mission of the press. Tarzi called newspapers a powerful means of information, "a mirror of the world", a guide to fiction and a highly effective weapon in the struggle against the ill-wishers of the motherland (in this connection he stressed the great importance of publicity).

The great merit of Mahmud Tarzi and his fellow-writers was the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The paper did not merely abstractly advocate science, extol knowledge and condemn ignorance, but did much to spread specific information on modern sciences, and technological achievements and inventions, introducing the reader to the big new world around isolated Afghanistan.

The basic theses of Mahmud Tarzi and his associates on the part played by science in the life of society and the state and their admiration for the power of reason were in themselves of no small significance. The mere fact that for the first time in the modern history of Afghanistan a group of educated people who did not belong to the class of ministers of religion by occupation or social status dared to state their interpretation of the Koran publicly, intervening in the sphere of the Muslim ulemas' exclusive privileges was fairly important. In keeping with their views Mahmud Tarzi and his followers declared that their plans for the renovation of the country did not in the least contradict Islam; on the contrary, they were fully in accord with this religion.

When reviewing the various subjects of scientific and popular-science articles printed in the *Siraj al-Akhbar*, special attention should be paid to theoretical articles. Using easily understandable language they gave the reader a general idea of modern sciences, such as philosophy, political economy and international law, and of such institutions as urban self-administration, of the joint-stock company and its significance, and the like, leading Afghan readers to the understanding of many phenomena previously unknown to them, and encouraging them to ponder over the progress of mankind, over the forms and the essence of European political and social institutions, etc. The *Siraj al-Akhbar* drew readers' attention to such branches of knowledge as archaeology, history, and philology. It also carried articles on art. The paper occasionally carried information about the latest results of research and exploration by Western scientists. It gave basic facts about the history of modern sciences and their attainments, and described major discoveries and inventions. It devoted much space to technical achievements, citing data on the development of communications–post, telegraph, telephone and radio–and the latest means of transportation of that time: steamship navigation and railways, explained how a car functioned, etc.

Hundreds of different articles opened up before the reader a picture of scientific and technological achievements of the beginning of the 20th century.

In general terms, the newspaper contained the following columns: 1) an editorial on political, philosophical or religious questions; 2) reports on developments in the country; 3) reports on events abroad, mostly in Muslim countries, and also in other countries of Asia and Europe; 4) a literary column including verses by modern poets of Afghanistan; 5) a column on science and technology mainly containing a translation of articles from foreign periodicals; 6) feuilleton; this column included translations of fiction (in the fifth year of the newspaper the column was closed to give more space for home and foreign news); 7) miscellaneous material and brief reports; 8) announcements.

When calling for reforms in the country, Mahmud Tarzi and his associates tried to explain the reasons for the backwardness of Afghanistan and other Muslim countries in modern times. The history of the Afghans, according to Tarzi, showed that one of the main causes of their backwardness was disregard for education and science. He noted bitterly that many generations of Afghans had had no capable and educated teachers. Traditions and superstition reigned in the country and Afghans, like other Muslims, had lost the valuable time for the development of their abilities and resources.

The newspaper also published views on the need to develop efficient agriculture, modern industry (with priority given to mining and building factories for processing local agricultural raw materials), trade, road building, and transport. Tarzi and his followers appealed to the emir and the ruling elite, setting hopes on the "enlightened monarch". They expected that the reforms would be carried out quickly "from above", mainly in education and the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge, which, they believed, were bound to bring about improvements in economic and social life. Mahmud Tarzi and those who supported him sought to adapt the Afghan monarchy to the requirements of their time, seeing in it an instrument for ensuring the country's progress.

At the same time, Afghan nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, a trend started by Mahmud Tarzi and his associates, reflected the desire of the Afghan people to become free of the semi-colonial dependence on British imperialism. Mahmud Tarzi himself took an active part in the struggle for independence at its different stages. His ideology was based on religion. He was a reformer of Islam in his country and he borrowed many ideas from the Arab and Turkish reformers of Islam of the latter half of the 19th century. Stating the religious basis of his ideology, it must be stressed that his consistent struggle against religious restrictions had progressive influence on Afghanistan. The *Siraj al-Akhbar* advocated the strengthening of relations with other Muslim countries. Although it propagated the ideas of Muslim unity within the framework of the pan-Islamic concept, the propaganda of relations with more advanced Oriental countries in order to assimilate the fundamentals of new enlightenment and new culture was in itself progressive for Afghanistan where the medieval way of life was preserved. The Afghans were urged to follow the example of such Muslim countries as the Ottoman empire and Persia, and also non-Muslim Japan on the hard path of progress, without which it was impossible to effectively confront modern armies and to overcome the technical superiority of the European countries.

Mahmud Tarzi's views were influenced by the national-bourgeois ideas of the Young Turks. This was also reflected in the content of the *Siraj al-Akhbar*, which not only stressed, in pan-Islamic spirit, special sympathy with Islamic countries, but constantly exhibited pro-Turkish sentiments, echoing the chauvinistic views of the Young Turks.

However, the *Siraj al-Akhbar* published material on the awakening of the East which did not fit into the religious restrictions. The foreign news column contained assessments of events characterising the progressive aspect of the Young Afghan ideology. For instance, the September 27 issue of 1912 gave the following assessment of the 1911 Chinese revolution and the proclamation of a republic in China: "This event merits great attention. It is becoming clear that the Chinese nation has woken up and its national feelings have come to the boil." The approval of the revolution, which was called "great" and was characterised as an event of extreme importance in a newspaper issued in feudal-monarchic Afghanistan, was highly significant in itself.

The *Siraj al-Akhbar* presented the developments at home with far greater caution. Much of the home news column was devoted to court life, contained pictures of the emir hunting, etc. The paper informed the reader of new developments in machinery and equipment used in the emir's palace and in the country in general and carried brief reports on the construction of industrial enterprises, the digging of canals, the building and repair of roads and bridges, and so on.

The events associated with the beginning of World War I could not but influence the emir's domestic and foreign policy. At the durbar held in Kabul on August 24, 1914, he proclaimed Afghanistan's neutrality. So he confirmed his resolve to maintain neutrality and refuted the rumours that he had hostile intentions with regard to Russia. Later on, Habibullah Khan continued to pursue the policy of neutrality in spite of the complex situation obtaining in the country.

Anti-British sentiments were strong in Afghanistan, especially among the border tribes. The situation was largely influenced by Turkey's joining the war in October 1914, and by the manifesto issued by the Turkish sultan declaring a *jihad* against Britain and Russia. The pro-Turkish and anti-British sentiments were strong at court among the reactionary conservatives and opponents of change, the Old Afghans, and still stronger among the Young Afghans.

To win over Afghanistan as an ally, the German imperialists attempted to exploit the religious prestige of the Turkish sultan. German and Turkish propaganda presented the Kaiser's Germany as a disinterested friend of the Muslims, and spread all kinds of inventions like a report saying that Wilhelm II of Germany had adopted Islam. A German-Turkish mission was set up in Turkey to induce the Afghan emir to enter the war on the side of Germany and its allies. The idea of launching an expedition to Afghanistan belonged to Enver Pasha, Turkey's chief of staff.[78] Even before the war, the Turkish general staff planned the expansion of Turkish influence to the areas close to India. As soon as Turkey joined the war, measures were immediately taken to organise an expedition to Afghanistan. At the end of 1914 Enver Pasha requested his German allies to send over a few officers to bolster the Turkish expedition.

The German general staff approved of the idea and sent to Turkey a group of officers headed by Senior Lieutenant Oskar von Niedermeyer. He had a good command of the Persian language and had taken part in a German expedition to Iran and India a few years before. The German foreign ministry attached to the mission W. O. von Hentig, a diplomatic official. Niedermeyer had the task of inducing Afghanistan to join the war on the side of Germany and its allies. He was to persuade Habibullah Khan to invade India and Russian Turkestan.

At the end of March 1915, the expedition set out from Baghdad in three groups, moving to the east during the nighttime. The Russians and the British knew that the expedition was approaching the Afghan border and assigned mounted detachments to patrol the border regions. The mission managed, though with great difficulty, to cross the Iranian-Afghan border. Chased by a Russian Cossack detachment, it had to forgo its baggage and gold. After August 20, 1915, the mission arrived in Herat, where it was received with honours. Then, accompanied by an escort, it went to Kabul.[79]

On receiving the news of the mission crossing the Iranian-Afghan border, Hardinge, viceroy of India, forwarded a letter to Habibullah Khan expressing confidence that the emir would prove the sincerity of his promise to observe strict neutrality.[80] According to the information received by Russian diplomats from the British authorities in India, in his reply to the viceroy the Afghan emir made a "solemn promise" to order that all the members of the mission be disarmed and detained, and then in a letter received by the viceroy on September 17, 1915, he allegedly wrote about the seizure in Herat of a gang of Germans which had been taken to Kabul under escort.[81]

Habibullah Khan showed indecision on his attitude to the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission. In the early days after their arrival in Kabul the members of the mission were even taken into custody. Only on the eighth day of their stay in Kabul did Niedermeyer get an answer to his letters to the emir who now said he agreed to receive the mission.

During the talk the Afghan emir was handed a letter from the Turkish sultan proposing that the emir should come out with Germany and its allies against Britain and Russia under the banner of *jihad*, and also a personal message from Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Kaiser reiterated the version about the liberating role of Germany which was being spread by German propaganda in the East, and promised unity with the Muslims in future as well.

The attitude of the emir to the mission and the treatment of its members were very uneven. During the talks Habibullah Khan was suspiciously alert. In January 1916 Niedermeyer and Hentig managed to persuade him to sign a draft treaty with Germany. After that he allowed the members of the mission to take part in reorganising the army. But during the subsequent talks, whenever the leaders of the mission mentioned Afghanistan's joining the war, the answers were vague and evasive, stipulated by preliminary conditions. At one meeting Habibullah Khan declared that Afghanistan would come out against Britain, only if Russia's neutrality would be ensured. At another meeting he made his joining the war conditional on the arrival from Germany of 20,000 troops, 100,000 rifles and 200 artillery guns, plus ammunition and equipment.[82]

Habibullah Khan would have preferred to pursue a policy of neutrality, but the pro-German attitudes of some of the high officials and courtiers often placed him in a tight corner. Nasrullah Khan, the emir's brother, who headed the Old Afghans group and was considered to be the chief claimant to the throne in case of a coup, was most active in this respect.

In these circumstances, the British hastened to tell the emir about the events of the war to persuade him to keep to the policy of neutrality and informed him of the seizure of Erzerum by Russian troops. They left no chance unused to discredit the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission in the eyes of the emir, informing him of intercepted letters testifying to the intentions of the mission's members to stage a coup in Afghanistan and, if Habibullah Khan further delayed his coming out against Russia and Britain, to dethrone him. In the spring of 1916 Niedermeyer and Hentig saw that there was no hope of involving Afghanistan in the war, so most members of the mission soon left the country.

There were a number of reasons for the failure of the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission. The Afghan emir was interested in observing neutrality, for he continued to receive an annual subsidy from the British and hoped for its promised increase from 1,900,000 rupees to 2,400,000 rupees, with a lump sum of 5,000,000 rupees to be paid additionally after the war.[83] But, when reviewing the policy of the Afghan government in 1914-1916, the attitude of Habibullah Khan to neutrality in general and neutrality as applied to Afghanistan in particular, clearly expressed in his public speeches, must be taken into account. Addressing a durbar in the spring of 1915, he described war as "the greatest of calamities" and noted that, in spite of the losses incurred by the belligerent countries, they "have achieved no results so far. This goes to show," he declared, "that at present only the neutral states are happy, and that strict neutrality is a great blessing for Afghanistan."[84] Examining the neutrality of the Afghan government and Britain's policy with regard to Afghanistan during World War I, it is essential to stress the immense significance of the conclusions and assessments made by Lenin concerning this range of questions. Lenin paid much attention to the eastern countries, in particular to Iran, and also to Afghanistan. Drawing on various well studied sources, Lenin brought out the specific features of the policy pursued by Britain with regard to Afghanistan during World War I. The British, he said, did not believe that the Afghans were, in military terms, the kind of adversaries to be underestimated and stressed that Britain "treats them with the greatest caution".[85] To prove his point Lenin cited the following extract from a book by T. Jaeger (Weimar, 1916) concerning relations between the British and the Afghan emir Habibullah Khan: "In this one sees the wisdom of Britain's 'velvet glove' policy, for the British could not behave to anyone more tolerantly and cautiously than they have to him."[86]

The British government was greatly concerned over the activities of the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission. But viceroy of India Hardinge refrained (contrary to the advice by the London leadership) from any attempts to induce the Afghan emir to give up that mission to the British.[87] The British policy-makers, who wished to avoid a conflict with Afghanistan also because they did not wish to let Russia take part in solving the "Afghan issue" (which was believed to be inevitable if Afghanistan ceased to be neutral), were extremely wary in relation to Habibullah Khan; this was often evident in their taking a milder approach in various questions related to border disputes.

Meanwhile, the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission on the border with India did not end its anti-British activities, even when most of its members had left Afghanistan, and the developments in the border regions populated by Afghan tribes had already taken a bad turn for the British: a large anti-British uprising of the tribes seemed imminent.[88]

For this reason the British government had to tolerate not only the existence of a small but influential Turkish community in Afghanistan, which exerted an anti-British influence, but also the functioning of the Indian emigrant revolutionary centre in Kabul which formed the so-called provisional émigré government of India there in December 1915. This Indian centre was headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap and Maulana Muhammad Barakatullah.*

Habibullah Khan, for his part, had to reckon with the sentiments of his population and with the need to observe the tradition of granting refuge. At first, he displayed indifference towards both the Provisional Government of India and the activities of Indian émigrés, for the most part Muslims. Later, to please the British, he launched reprisals against them, some of the émigrés were deported, which did, to a certain extent, discredit his regime.

The emir's attitude to the anti-British liberation struggle of the Afghan tribes abroad was one of the main reasons for dissatisfaction with his rule. The anti-British armed actions of these tribes' volunteer forces were in some instances supported by the Khost tribes and other subjects of the emir. From 1915 onwards these actions became more intense.[89] In 1916-1917, Habibullah Khan rendered assistance to the British colonial authorities in their attempts to localise the seats of insurrection among the Afghan tribes and to prevent their spreading in the regions along the north-western border of India. The actions of the emir and his officials set off a tide of indignation in Afghanistan. The emir began to receive anonymous letters in which he was accused of treason and betrayal of Islam. Afghan intellectuals were most sensitive to the actions of Habibullah Khan and the frontier authorities. By that time national consciousness had notably increased, since the Afghan nation had begun to take shape.**

The explosive situation at home and abroad compelled the emir to build up his armed forces and improve the entire military machine. In 1916-1917, reforms were being carried out in the Afghan army and measures were being taken to improve military training "in case of internal complications".[90]

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* The Indian revolutionaries Mahendra Pratap and Muhammad Barakatullah, who employed the tactics of forming an alliance with countries hostile to Britain for the purpose of using their financial and military support to liberate India, were included by the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin in the Niedermeyer-Hentig mission and arrived in Kabul as members of this mission.

** The growth of national consciousness among the Afghans was manifest in those years in the development of a national culture, in the enlightenment activity of Mahmud Tarzi and his followers, and in the beginning of a revival of written literature in Pushtu. The increased interest in the country's history on the part of Afghan intellectuals and educated people among those close to the emir (shared by Habibullah Khan himself) was expressed in the issuing of an official historical study *Siraj at-Tawarikh*. The first museum in Afghanistan was opened in Kabul in 1918. Later, it became a major centre for the development of national culture and is world famous today.

Unsubdued Afghanistan was kept in isolation by British imperialism. But the freedom-loving traditions of the Afghan tribes on both sides of the Indian-Afghan border, the tribes, which in many areas were not yet totally enslaved by khans and landowners, the fact that part of the population still possessed arms, the hatred of foreign enslavers which had fermented through the ages, and the striving for independence, had all set the stage for launching a national liberation struggle in favourable circumstances. Such circumstances were created by the victorious Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, which radically changed the international situation in general and Afghanistan's foreign policy in particular.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFGHANISTAN IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Independence Restored

The Great October Revolution in Russia had a tremendous impact on the national liberation movement in the East. The Leninist foreign policy principles of the young Soviet state, proclaimed in the Decree on Peace, defined Soviet policy with regard to Afghanistan. The appeal addressed by the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Federation "To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East", which affirmed the right of all Muslim peoples to be the masters of their fate,[1] evoked a broad response in Afghanistan. It constituted, in effect, Soviet recognition of Afghanistan as a sovereign and independent state. The position adopted by the Soviet Government was given official expression in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, signed in the spring of 1918. Article 7 of the treaty declared that "Persia and Afghanistan are free and independent states".[2]

Considering that the establishment of diplomatic relations with Afghanistan would help the Afghans in their liberation struggle, the Soviet government proposed in July 1918 that a Soviet mission be set up in that country. Yielding to British pressure, Emir Habibullah Khan rejected the proposal. At the end of 1918 the Soviet side repeated its proposal, which again came up against the Emir's opposition.

Meanwhile dissatisfaction with the policy of Habibullah Khan was spreading in Afghanistan. Levies and taxes were increased, call-up campaigns became more frequent, and the attitude of the authorities towards the population became increasingly arbitrary and despotic. All power, in fact, was now in the hands of the Emir's favourite, Muhammad Husayn, Minister of Finance, who represented the emerging compradore circles and was, in essence, an agent of British capital and did all he could to help spread British influence in the country. The Emir led an extravagant life, ignoring the rapidly changing situation. His stubborn unwillingness to establish direct contacts with the Soviet Republic, that is, to take the opportunity to achieve independence for Afghanistan, only brought nearer the domestic crisis which spelled the end of his rule.

In the summer of 1918 British troops invaded Soviet Turkestan and seized Kushka, a town on the border with Afghanistan. Thus, Afghanistan found itself surrounded by the British on three sides (by that time the British also had unlimited influence in Persia). The country's political isolation from the rest of the world, imposed by the British colonialists and perpetuated by the policy of Habibullah Khan, was turning into territorial isolation, sustained by the presence of the British troops on the northern and southern borders. Drastic measures were needed if the country was to emerge from this difficult position.

As a result of the complex domestic and international situation, opposition in the country was mounting rapidly. An attempt on the Emir's life in the summer of 1918 led to massive repressions which, combined with serious economic difficulties, only served to further aggravate the general dissatisfaction with the regime. On the night of February 20, 1919 Habibullah Khan was assassinated near Jalalabad. For a few days there was dual power in the country. The Emir's brother, Nasrullah Khan, who was in Jalalabad at the time, proclaimed himself the Emir. At the same time, Amanullah Khan, the third son of Habibullah Khan (in his father's absence he was the vicegerent in Kabul), supported by a part of the Kabul garrison and the city population, also declared himself the Emir. He announced that his immediate goal was to free the country from dependence on Britain. The political sympathies of the population were with the young prince. Soon Nasrullah Khan and some of his supporters were arrested.[3] Muhammad Husayn was hanged. Amanullah Khan became the new Emir. The attempt by the conservatives to seize power had failed.

The refusal of the British colonial authorities to recognise Afghan independence led to armed clashes between the Afghan army and British troops in May 1919. The Afghans offered stubborn resistance, despite the numerical superiority and better technical equipment of the British army. The rout of the British invaders beyond the Caspian Sea and the armed uprising of the Pashtun tribes in the North-Western Border Province helped Afghanistan in the struggle for independence. Britain was compelled to agree to peace with Afghanistan, and a preliminary peace treaty was signed in Rawalpindi on August 8, 1919. In the treaty the British officially recognised the complete independence of Afghanistan, which ended the long period of its semi-colonial dependence on British imperialism.

The Soviet Government was the first to recognise Afghanistan's independence in March 1919, and this was of great assistance to the Afghan people in their struggle. In a letter to Amanullah Khan, Lenin greeted the independent Afghan people and confirmed the Soviet Government's intention to establish friendly relations between the two states.[4] The Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty, signed on February 28, 1921, paved the way for friendly relations for many years to come and served as a major factor in strengthening the national sovereignty of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan in 1919-1929

Having won independence, the new government set about introducing a series of reforms to overcome economic backwardness and achieve social progress.

One of the most significant of these reforms was the adoption in 1923 of the first Afghan constitution, which confirmed the country's independence, declared the Emir to be the supreme ruler and proclaimed a certain number of civil liberties. At the same time the State Council (a consultative body under the Emir), the Loy Jirgah (the Afghan assembly of tribal chiefs and Muslim clergy), the Durbar-i Ali (a council of government officials), and the government, which held executive power, were established.

Economic changes were an important part of the programme of reforms carried out by the Amanullah Khan government. In 1920, it passed the land-tax law under which taxes in kind were replaced by taxes paid in money. This speeded up the development of commodity-money relations. In 1923, it issued the livestock-tax act unifying taxation for all livestock breeders and abolishing additional taxes.

But the most significant innovation of all, and one which greatly influenced the subsequent evolution of the forms of ownership and, consequently, the pattern of social relations in the countryside, was the Regulations for the Sale of State Land in Afghanistan, adopted in 1924. This act legalised the private ownership of land, which was a powerful stimulus to the growth of landed estates. Nearly all the land was sold off to landlords, officials and money-lenders. Other economic measures involved the resettlement of some of the nomads in the northern regions of the country and the confiscation and sale of land owned by clergymen. Customs duties were introduced and a law encouraging industrial development was adopted.

The reforms effected by the new regime were aimed, on the whole, at eliminating the most archaic forms of feudalism and speeding up the development of a new socio-economic system. They met, to a great extent, the interests of the nascent classes—the "new" landowners and the national commercial bourgeoisie—which were still small in numbers and whose economic significance was as yet minimal. Most of the reforms damaged the position of conservative sections of society: the orthodox elite of the Muslim clergy, tribal khans, and big feudal landowners. The reforms did not improve the position of the peasants, the largest productive class, for they did not free them from feudal exploitation, but only speeded up the process by which they were being dispossessed of land, and made more dependent on money-lenders and landlords.

Discontent with the reforms developed into an anti-government rebellion by the Khost tribes led by mullahs in the spring of 1924. The rebels demanded that the new legislation be repealed, that free trade with British India be restored and that the reforms (mostly concerning social issues and way of life), condemned by the mullahs for contradicting Islam, be cancelled. The rebellious tribes received aid from the British colonialists, who sought to weaken the new Afghan regime. The British even attempted to put their stooge Abdul Karim, the son of former Emir Yaqub Khan, at the head of the movement.

Unable to suppress the rebellion of the southern tribes, the government agreed to a compromise: at the Loy Jirgah held in the summer of 1924 it was compelled to cancel some of the reforms. The socio-economic restructuring of the country was slowed down considerably.

The formation of a new politico-economic structure in the country required the expansion of Afghan foreign relations. After national independence had been restored and political isolation ended, the government of Amanullah Khan took vigorous measures to establish relations with a large number of countries. By 1924 Afghanistan had established relations with the Russian Federation, Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. The 1926 Soviet-Afghan Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression was an important milestone in the history of relations between the two countries, and Afghanistan's now traditional policy of neutrality was thus legally confirmed. In order to further expand Afghanistan's foreign relations and bolster up its international prestige, King Amanullah Khan,* accompanied by some of his ministers and advisers, set out on an extended tour abroad.

His itinerary included visits to India, Egypt, Italy, France, Germany, Britain, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Iran. When in India, the king urged Muslims and Hindus to unite in the struggle for freedom. His anti-colonialist speeches greatly alarmed the British colonial authorities. In Egypt, which was, in effect, under British control, he spoke of defending national independence. The main purpose of his stay in Italy was the purchase of arms. When in France he examined large factories and reached an agreement on deliveries of French weapons. The visit by the Afghan King to Germany had economic motives. Amanullah Khan signed preliminary agreements on granting German industrialists concessions to construct railways in Afghanistan, and invited German engineers and technicians to his country.

During his stay in Britain the British authorities tried to exert pressure on him and, demonstrating their industrial and military might, tried to persuade him to establish closer contacts with Britain to the detriment of Afghan-Soviet relations. But Amanullah Khan rejected all those attempts.

The king arrived in Moscow in May 1928 and was warmly received by Soviet government leaders. During his two weeks in the USSR he was acquainted with the economic and cultural achievements of the Soviet people. The two sides signed documents on expanding economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

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* Before the tour Amanullah Khan assumed the title of King (padishah), wishing to stress the independent and sovereign character of his state.

The visit by Amanullah Khan to Turkey and Iran resulted in the signing of friendship treaties with these countries, which strengthened their position in the face of continuing political and economic expansion of Western imperialism.

On the whole, the tour of the King of Afghanistan proved fruitful. It strengthened Afghanistan's foreign ties and offered it new opportunities to carry out further important changes in its economic and political life.

Back home, Amanullah Khan began preparing a new series of reforms to eradicate the outdated feudal system. Late in August 1928 he put a draft of new reforms before the Loy Jirgah session in Pagman. These reforms included the cancellation of various privileges enjoyed by feudal lords and tribal leaders and they also weakened the political position of the conservative Muslim clergy who were opposing the government policy of reforms. Secular courts of justice were instituted. All mullahs were to be recertified. The king and his supporters made attempts to modernise family and marital relations, and to fix a minimum age for marriage. Here, however, they failed. At a durbar in October, the supporters of Amanullah Khan advanced new draft reforms affecting social and daily life. They included mixed education at schools, sending Afghan young people to study abroad, the banning of polygamy, the abolition of the yashmak, etc.[5]

In the new programme put forward by the Young Afghan Government, a great deal of emphasis was placed on economic development. In a bid to limit the economic influence of foreign (Anglo-Indian) capital, which had monopolised the foreign and, in part, the domestic trade of Afghanistan, the government of Amanullah Khan began pursuing a protectionist policy with regard to local merchants. In the 1920s, the first joint-stock companies (*sherkats*) appeared, with shares held also by members of the ruling circles, including the Emir.

Attempts to pool national capital in the *sherkats* were intensified in the late 1920s, by which time the country had about 20 trade companies with a total capital of 5.5-6 million afghanis.[6] The *sherkats* were granted monopoly rights to procure and market staple commodities. As a result, the position of foreign merchants in the country was somewhat weakened. By the end of the 1920s national capital accounted for nearly 40 per cent of all foreign trade transactions.[7] At the Loy Jirgah session in August 1928, Amanullah Khan informed the deputies about his talks with Western industrialists and about the signing of concessional agreements with them. He proposed that a state bank be set up, with a view to using merchant capital for the needs of the state. But the merchants, who feared to trust their money to the state, demanded that the bank be private, and did not support the proposal.

The reform programme also provided for important measures to develop the military forces of the country. Planning to reorganise the Afghan army on the European model, Amanullah Khan insisted on the introduction of universal military service in place of the voluntary system, on the extension of compulsory military service from 2 to 3 years, and on a ban on the practice of recruit replacement or release through payment. Since the purchase of arms abroad demanded considerable state expenditure, Amanullah Khan introduced, in the autumn of 1928, an additional extraordinary tax–5 afghanis from every individual.[8]

The government also paid considerable attention to combating deeply rooted social evils, particularly red-tape, bribery and smuggling. However it did not go farther than appeals and impracticable plans. What was needed was a radical change of the social structure of the state, which was not the intention of the Young Afghans. It was also proposed that the state administration system be reorganised. Amanullah Khan suggested that a national council–the prototype of a future parliament–be set up in place of the State Council (which was a mere consultative body at court). However, this proposal also proved impossible to implement at the time because of the mounting opposition of various sections of the population to the reforms being introduced by the regime.

Signs of growing political tension in the country became apparent during the Loy Jirgah session in the heated debate over the bills, and could be seen in the direct pressure exerted by Amanullah Khan and his retinue on the deputies, and in the poorly disguised unwillingness of the latter to back up the reforms. Among the people close to the king there was increasing disagreement over the scope and depth of socio-economic change; there was no political unity, and the rivalry among various leaders was growing more acute. The radicalism of the reforms proposed by Amanullah Khan increased the number of his adversaries. The king's attempt to form a party—Istiqlal wa tajaddod (Independence and Renovation)—as a political basis for modernisation came up against resistance on the part of influential leaders of the Young Afghan movement, who held moderate views. Fearing opposition in the higher echelons of power, Amanullah Khan carried out a purge of the state apparatus and some prominent national figures who supported Young Afghan views lost their posts. Among those who resigned were Mahmud-Beg Tarzi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the ideologist of the Young Afghan movement, and Minister of Defence Muhammad Wali Khan, one of the king's closest advisers, the man who headed the first Afghan diplomatic mission to Moscow in 1919.[9] They were replaced by people without definite political orientation who had managed to win the king's trust. Some of them did not even conceal their hostility towards the reforms. Among the people close to Amanullah Khan there was an atmosphere of intrigue, distrust, enmity and factional conflict.

The alignment of class forces in the country in the autumn of 1928 showed that opposition sentiments had grown to mass proportions. The opponents of the policy of reforms were joined by the reactionary elite of the Muslim clergy dissatisfied with the new regime. They were displeased by many of the innovations introduced by the government, primarily by attempts to belittle the mullahs' public and political role, secularise many aspects of social life, and place the mullahs' activities under the control of the secular authorities. Muslim fundamentalists were most indignant at the reforms in the social area and every-day life, for they limited their traditional monopoly in family and marital matters. It was precisely the reforms affecting family life that came under the sharpest attack. Amanullah Khan was declared "godless", a "heretic" flouting the sacred principles of Islam, a man led by the "faith-less". The elite of the Muslim clergy—the most fervent opponents of bourgeois reforms—became the ideologists of the anti-government movement. They were joined by feudal landowners and tribal khans displeased with the restriction of their power in their localities, with the loss of their traditional privileges, and with the drop in their duty-free trade (smuggling, in fact) with British India.

The peasants, the poor stock breeders and handicraftsmen, also joined in the movement. Some of the social measures of the Amanullah Khan government, in particular, abolition of various additional taxes and requisitions, elimination of slavery, and proclamation of religious equality eased feudal oppression on these sections of the population, but on the whole they had got no direct benefits from the reforms. On the contrary, at the initial stage of the country's transition to bourgeois development, their economic situation deteriorated seriously. The land tax increased to reach 45 per cent of the harvest cost by the end of the 1920s.[10] For the most part, the government reforms were carried out at the expense of the peasants. Expenditure on the king's foreign tour and on the purchase of weapons, machines and equipment abroad were a heavy burden on the peasants. And, last but not least, replacement of taxes in kind with taxes in cash, and legalisation of private landownership directly affected the position of the peasantry, causing major changes in the subsequent evolution of the peasant farming and social relationships in the countryside. Having no ready money to pay taxes, the peasant had to borrow from money-lender or a landowner on the security of the future harvest from his plot of land, and thus he found himself in debt. (The expropriation of peasant lands left more and more peasants landless, and this expropriation continued right up to the April 1978 revolution.) In the end, the peasants, who were dependent on feudal lords and khans, came out in protest against reforms which made their conditions still worse, and against the new regime, constituting the main driving force of the anti-government movement.

The first signs of the impending socio-political crisis became obvious in the autumn of 1928, when bands appeared north of Kabul robbing the local rich. This was still a spontaneous form of social protest by the peasants, driven to desperation by excessive requisitions and the local authorities' arbitrary rule. One such band of robbers was led by Habibullah, known as Bacha-i Saqao (the son of a water-carrier), a non-commissioned officer who had deserted from the army. His band soon began to attack members of the local administration. He shared part of the stolen goods with the poor. The activity of Bacha-i Saqao in the Northern Province and the support he received from the local peasants alarmed the government, which was compelled to take measures to neutralise him, though without obvious success.

In that same period, in November 1928, some of the Pashtun tribes in the Eastern Province rose up in arms against the government. The uprising quickly spread to many other regions. The governor of the province announced that military units would be called in and tribal volunteers raised, and simultaneously called upon the insurgents to end the rebellion. The central authorities dispatched reinforcements to the insurgent province and by the end of November the army units and the insurgents were involved in serious clashes.

The leaders of the uprising–Muhammad Alam and Muhammad Afzal, the religious leaders of the Shinwari tribe–issued a manifesto setting forth the insurgents' goals. The uprising, the manifesto said, was an attempt "to change the method of administering the country and to remove rulers guilty of bribery and corruption, who issue laws contradicting Sharia". The territories controlled by the insurgents, the manifesto went on, were administered "in keeping with the laws of Sharia and the ulemas are their genuine rulers". The chief cause of the uprising, said the authors of the manifesto, lay in the "pagan reforms" of Amanullah Khan. The manifesto called for the king to be overthrown.[11] On December 9 a 10-day truce was concluded between the rebels and a government delegation. A few days later, however, the conflict broke out again and the insurgents besieged Jalalabad, the centre of the province.

In the meantime the anti-government activity of Bacha-i Saqao was gaining momentum. His broad popularity in the Northern Province attracted the opposition, primarily reactionary Muslim leaders, who decided to use Bacha-i Saqao in the struggle against Amanullah Khan's regime. At a meeting of khans, held on December 12 in the village of Kalakan (the birthplace of Bacha-i Saqao), he was proclaimed the emir of Afghanistan under the name of Habibullah Ghazi. On the same day he attacked the city of Saraj Hoja and disarmed the local garrison. His comrade-in-arms Said Husayn, a small landowner, seized the town of Jabal Os-Saraj and the town's garrison surrendered without a shot. Bacha-i Saqao prepared to take Kabul.

The king and his retinue found themselves in a difficult situation. The ruling elite was in a state of confusion and fear. Some statesmen were secretly establishing contacts with Bacha-i Saqao. Hazrat-i Shor Bazaar Mujaddidi, an outstanding Muslim theologian who had been banished from the country by Amanullah Khan and now lived in exile in British India, stepped up his activity against the Afghan king. Disturbances spilled over to other provinces of Afghanistan.

The general discontent affected the army, which for the most part consisted of people from oppressed national minorities. Most of the officers, who did not approve of radical reforms, were also opposed to the king. Desertion from the army reached mass proportions. On December 13 a 3,000-strong unit of Bacha-i Saqao's forces launched an attack on Kabul, which was repelled only with enormous effort.

On December 29 the reactionary Muslim leaders, using Bacha-i Saqao as their representative, issued a religious edict in which they attempted to prove the legality of Bacha-i Saqao's claims to the throne. The edict attacked the government's political and social reforms, accused the king of "godlessness" and declared him to be dethroned. Bacha-i Saqao was proposed for the post of the emir. The edict's authors promised he would rule the country in keeping with Sharia.[12]

Having lost the support of the main social forces, Amanullah Khan turned for aid to his own Durrani tribe, but its leaders refused to support him in the struggle against the rebellious eastern tribes, and called upon him to observe the rules of Sharia. In despair, the king sent his relative, Ali Ahmad Khan, the governor of Kabul, who secretly shared the views of the opposition and himself aspired to the throne, to Jalalabad to negotiate with the insurgents. Early in January 1929 he managed to conclude an armistice. The *jirgah* of local tribes, held in Jalalabad on January 5, put forward its own demands, which included, among other things, complete restoration of the Sharia laws, reduction of taxes, representation of the mullahs in the state apparatus, deportation of foreign missions, and repeal of the new criminal procedure code.[13]

The mounting political crisis in Afghanistan was accompanied by greater activity by British imperialism in the region. Long before the uprising, the British authorities in India began to erect fortifications and build communication lines along the border with Afghanistan, along which a large armed force had been concentrated. In November 1928, Anglo-Indian troops started military exercises in the area.

At that time Colonel T. E. Lawrence of the British intelligence service appeared in the border region. He was engaged in subversive activities among the tribes in the region. The Afghan government issued an order to arrest him if found on Afghan territory.

The British started open interference in Afghan affairs. British planes repeatedly violated the air space over Afghanistan. Mr. Humphreys, British envoy in Kabul, met with Bacha-i Saqao, to assure him of his sympathy. The explosive situation in Kabul led the British to evacuate their diplomatic mission. However their plots against the regime of Amanullah Khan did not stop. On December 22, Muhammad Omar Khan, a grandson of former Emir Sher Ali Khan, who lived in Allahabad on financial aid supplied by the British authorities, left for Afghanistan, where he tried to make his way into the area affected by the uprising and lead the tribes against Amanullah Khan, who did not suit the British.

As it found itself increasingly isolated, the regime surrendered: on January 9, 1929, it issued a *firman* repealing a number of major reforms pertaining to social and everyday life. Universal military service was cancelled; the mullahs' rights were restored, and a senate was set up from among "well-known *ulemas*, sardars, khans and some officials". But it was too late. Even this move could not win Amanullah Khan time. The regime was doomed: Kabul was besieged by the insurgent troops of Bacha-i Saqao.

On January 14, 1929, Amanullah Khan abdicated in favour of his elder brother, Inayatullah Khan, and left the capital for Qandahar. Bacha-i Saqao refused to accept the armistice offered by the new emir, captured Kabul, and was proclaimed the emir of Afghanistan on January 19. Inayatullah Khan left for Peshawar on board a British plane and later joined Amanullah Khan in Qandahar.

Thus ended an important period in the independent development of Afghanistan. The failure of the policy of reforms and the fall of the Amanullah Khan regime came as a result of the complex process of class struggle reflecting the clash of old and new social forces—the young national bourgeoisie and feudal reaction. The chief manifestation of class activity in the late 1920s was the spontaneous movement among working sections of the population, who protested against their worsening conditions. The mass actions by peasants and poor livestock breeders were used in the struggle against the Young Afghan regime by feudal reaction backed up by British imperialism.

The new authorities in Kabul, with Emir Bacha-i Saqao at their head, were supported by conservative circles comprising feudal lords and reactionary Muslim leaders, the opponents of reforms. Having accused Amanullah Khan of violating the laws of Sharia, the new regime annulled all the reforms that damaged the interests of the reactionary opposition. The abolition of universal compulsory military service suited the separatist-minded tribal khans. At the same time, the emir, who wished to retain the support of the peasants, the main driving force behind the uprising, cancelled the debt arrears of the preceding years and all additional requisitions and dues.

Immediately after coming to power, Bacha-i Saqao set about to removing rival claimants to the throne. His troops subdued the North, the Herat Province, and in May 1929 even seized Qandahar. But a number of regions remained independent and their recognition of the power of Kabul was merely nominal.

With the annulment of the main reforms introduced by the former regime, Afghanistan regressed in terms of social and economic development. Schools were closed and education was now controlled by the mullahs, the ministries of education and justice were abolished, justice was now controlled by Sharia courts, and women were deprived even of the rudimentary rights they had received under Amanullah Khan. In the very first days of the new regime a new legislative body—the Islamiya—was set up. It consisted of mullahs and the most important khans.

The economy, too, suffered a serious reversal. Bacha-i Saqao began large-scale confiscation and plunder of property belonging not only to the supporters of Amanullah Khan but also to a large number of merchants. Foreign and domestic trade was paralysed. Banditry became frequent. National industry declined. The prices of staple products shot up. The events of 1928 caused the utter disruption of state finances. To replenish the treasury Bacha-i Saqao increased taxes, thereby contradicting his own declarations. The deceived peasants gradually turned away from the ruler in Kabul. They received no protection against the arbitrary behaviour and extortion of state tax collectors, usually the same men who had collected taxes under Amanullah Khan.

The new regime also failed in its foreign policy. Not a single state recognised it officially. Most of the foreign diplomatic missions had left Kabul in January and February 1929. Only the Turkish, German and Soviet missions remained in the Afghan capital. The government of Bacha-i Saqao showed no interest in promoting Soviet-Afghan relations, which grew far worse at that period because of the spread of the anti-Soviet basmachi movement in Afghanistan. The Kabul emir gave every encouragement to the actions of basmachi gangs who made frequent incursions into the Soviet territory, assaulting representatives of Soviet power and the local population. Despite the repeated protests of the Soviet Government, the Kabul regime did nothing to stop these anti-Soviet activities.

Throughout the rule of Bacha-i Saqao the struggle for power continued in Afghanistan. Former Kabul governor Ali Ahmad Khan, who was in Jalalabad, exploited the situation and, having enlisted the support of army units and some of the rebellious tribes, declared himself the emir of the Eastern Province on January 20.[14] He abolished all the remaining reforms introduced by Amanullah Khan and cancelled tax debts. But as he needed money, he made the Indian merchants of Jalalabad pay him their debts to the government of Amanullah Khan and began collecting taxes from the population three months in advance. Hoping for British assistance, Ali Ahmad Khan asked the British for financial and military aid. His attempt to seize Kabul failed due to massive desertion and also as a result of inter-tribal discord. Left without any support, he fled to Peshawar.

Meanwhile Amanullah Khan had arrived in Qandahar. As soon as he learnt about the flight of Inayatullah Khan he annulled his abdication and began preparations for an expedition to Kabul. The population of the province responded with reluctance to his appeal for support in the struggle for power. However, he soon formed a small army and on March 26 set out from Qandahar to Ghazni, where the largest concentration of Bacha-i Saqao's troops was deployed. By the middle of April the troops of the former king reached Ghazni and engaged in battle with the army of Bacha-i Saqao. But here, too, Amanullah Khan suffered a setback. His army was poorly supplied and its morale was very low. Moreover, Bacha-i Saqao was supported by the Ghilzai tribes, the old rivals of the Durranis. Late in April the army of Amanullah Khan began a disordered retreat. On May 23 the former king announced a ceasefire and left Afghanistan together with his family.* His defeat was inevitable, since his programme of struggle had remained unchanged and therefore did not enjoy wide support.

In April 1929, Ghulam Nabi Khan, former Afghan Ambassador in Moscow, gathered together a sizeable detachment of Uzbeks and Hazaras and seized Mazar-i-Sharif in a surprise attack. He declared himself to be a supporter of Amanullah Khan and made no claim to the throne. Soon he controlled the whole of Northern Afghanistan. After the defeat of Amanullah Khan, however, his position grew weaker, and he left Afghanistan in early June.

In the spring of 1929, General Muhammad Nadir Khan, ex-minister of war, joined the struggle for the throne. He had been removed from his ministerial post for his opposition to the radicalism of Amanullah Khan's reforms and had been appointed ambassador to France. In 1927, he retired on pension and lived privately in Nice. When Bacha-i Saqao came to power he returned home with his brothers, Shah Wali Khan and Hashim Khan, and declared he would oppose the emir, who had seized power illegally. At that time Nadir Khan refused to support Amanullah Khan, as he intended to form an independent movement. He disguised his quest for power by "asking his countrymen to abstain from the bloodshed and civil war".[15]

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* Amanullah Khan died in exile in Italy.

In March 1929, Nadir Khan arrived in Khost and began to gather tribal volunteer forces. At first his struggle against Bacha-i Saqao was unsuccessful. In the tribal area inter-tribal strife was spreading and separatist sentiments prevailed. The peasants still believed Bacha-i Saqao's promises to relieve their tax burden. Nadir Khan began his military-political campaign in the spring, when the farmers were busy in the fields, and he also experienced serious financial difficulties.

By the end of the summer, however, the situation had changed. The policy of Bacha-i Saqao led the country into an economic impasse and caused political anarchy. The peasants no longer supported the regime. The slump in trade, arbitrary rule and repression caused the merchants to join the emir's enemies. Loss of central control hit the country and there was the danger of civil war and a weakening of sovereignty, which could bring about state dependence. Spontaneous disturbances among the working people continued. As a result, various sections of the ruling classes who at the beginning had supported Bacha-i Saqao, now turned their backs on him, which gave Nadir Khan abundant scope for action. He was assisted by the British, with whom he had long maintained close contacts. His attempts to suppress the spontaneous popular movement, to unite the leaders of the ruling classes and establish a firm government suited them very well. Early in September 1929, a few thousand people from the Wazir and Mahsud tribes living in British India joined Nadir's army, largely due to the efforts of the British colonial authorities.[16] Later, when he came to power, Nadir Khan received free financial aid from the British government to the tune of £175,000.[17]

At the end of September, Nadir Khan and his supporters began a serious military campaign. On October 8, his army routed the emir's troops and occupied Kabul. Unable to offer effective resistance, Bacha-i Saqao fled from the capital, but was captured. On November 2, 1929 he was executed together with his closest supporters.[18]

On October 15, Nadir Khan entered the capital. At a meeting of his associates and supporters he was proclaimed the Padishah of Afghanistan.

Nadir Shah was supported by the former enemies of Amanullah Khan—feudal lords, sardars, tribal khans, and conservative orthodox mullahs—and also by members of the new social strata—liberal landowners, merchants and money-lenders. Some saw him as fairly conservative, since he had been opposed to Amanullah Khan's radical reforms, while others saw him as a man supporting economic progress and a moderate degree of modernisation. He was opposed by many influential supporters of Amanullah Khan. Nadir Shah ruthlessly stamped out any opposition. Muhammad Wali Khan, one of the closest associates of the former king, was arrested and executed. Ghulam Nabi Khan, who returned from exile in 1932, was soon arrested on charges of organising an anti-Nadir plot among the Khost tribes and executed. His brother, Ghulam Ghilani Khan, was executed some time later. Many Amanullah's supporters were arrested and some deported. The peasants, national minorities, and poor livestock breeders from the Pashtun tribes continued their protest actions unrelated with the interests of any of the political groupings or claimants to the throne. Though Nadir Shah and the ruling elite, frightened by the extent of popular discontent, instructed that "some allowances are to be made in recovering arrears", the tax system remained unchanged, and requisitions and oppression by local officials continued. The rural economy had suffered enormously during the events of 1928-1929.

By November 1929 peasant disturbances had already broken out in Qohdaman, north of Kabul. On November 30, about 10,000 insurgents captured the city of Charikar and attacked Jabal Os-Saraj. The peasant movement was ruthlessly suppressed.

In June 1930, an uprising flared up again in the region. The insurgent Tajik population was joined by some of the Pashtun peasants who were dissatisfied with the government's tax policy. When regular army units failed to defeat the insurgents, Nadir Shah used voluntary armed forces recruited from the tribes. He promised the 25,000 Pashtun volunteers who gathered in Kabul in August to reduce taxes, or cancel them altogether. As a result of this the uprising was drowned in blood.

In October 1932, disturbances began in Khost. The insurgents were protesting against the government's tax policy and accused Nadir Shah of going back on his promise to reduce taxation. The uprising was led by mullah Lewanai, who had risen from the lower ranks of the clergy (the tribal elite remained loyal to the government). The uprising lasted for more than six months. Nadir Shah requested the British authorities in India to prevent the Wazir and Muhsud tribes living in India from joining the movement. The British backed up Nadir Shah and the insurgents were defeated.

All those actions were part of the class struggle that had developed over the preceding years. Though they did not have the same scope as the social clashes which occurred in the preceding period, they had a new class content, showing that the peasants had grown more mature politically and socially. Therefore the exploiter classes considered the movement even more dangerous than the radicalism of the Young Afghan reformers, and this induced them to rally round Nadir Shah and his regime.

In the summer of 1931, the Afghan army crushed what remained of the basmachi groups, which had not only crossed the Soviet border but robbed people in Afghan territory. Having formed a government from among his relatives and closest supporters, Nadir Shah issued a declaration on November 16, 1929, setting forth the main principles of his domestic and foreign policies. The main emphasis was on the idea of a "class alliance", as the cornerstone of the social structure of the state. Nadir Shah also promised to improve the tax system and combat embezzlement.

Nadir Shah's programme also allotted an important role to Islam. The mullahs' rights and privileges, which had been restored and extended by the Bacha-i Saqao regime, were left unchanged, and they had the opportunity to influence important decisions in state matters through the Ulema Council, set up within the framework of the Ministry of Justice. The provisions of the civil and criminal code were brought in line with the norms of the Sharia law. Women were obliged to wear the yashmak, women's schools were closed down and polygamy was restored.

The main principles of Nadir Shah's regime, set forth in his declaration, were enshrined in the constitution adopted at the Loy Jirgah session in October 1931. Its chief purpose was to consolidate the power of the ruling classes and guard their interests against the social dangers resulting from popular actions in 1928 and 1929. However, the regime could not afford to ignore the growing influence of the bourgeois classes who also sought to secure their interests in state administration and who were most interested in strengthening state sovereignty and putting an end to feudal fragmentation. The constitution proclaimed equality of all people before the law, granted them a number of civil liberties, and abolished feudal estate disabilities. It also proclaimed freedom of trade, industrial and agricultural activity, and also the inviolability of private property.

The greater part of the 1931 constitutional provisions were determined by the predominance of feudal relations in the economy. They fixed the rights and privileges of the Muslim clergy. The rights of Afghan subjects, the constitution said, were regulated not only by civil laws, but also by the laws of Sharia. The mullahs received considerable freedom of action in the sphere of education. Islamic law was now freely taught and the Sharia courts of justice were granted autonomy.

The modified social structure of power, which now included members of the bourgeois classes, also determined the form of state administration. The functions of the Loy Jirgah (in which the ulemas and the tribal elite were broadly represented) were extended in matters relating to financial, specifically taxation, policy. At the same time the constitution provided for the participation of traders and landowners in state organs. A parliament was established consisting of two houses: the upper house, or the Council of the Nobility (Senate), and the lower house, the National Assembly. The majority of the members of the upper house were appointed by the shah from among the owners of large estates, tribal khans and the upper muslim clergy. The National Assembly was elective. Its members had to be educated persons aged between 30 and 70 with a reputation for "honesty and fairness", which gave the ruling elite a chance to turn down undesirable candidates for political reasons. The right to take part in elections was denied to women, landless peasants moving about the country in search of jobs, and to small nomad tribes. The functions of the National Assembly included approving legislation and the state budget, granting stock-exchange companies benefits and privileges, and considering questions related to domestic and foreign loans. Cabinet members were formally responsible to the parliament. The National Assembly had, in fact, very limited opportunities to influence the government's policy.

The greater part of the constitution was devoted to the prerogatives and privileges of Nadir Shah and his dynasty. According to the constitution, the shah had the right to approve the composition of the cabinet of ministers, veto bills, conduct foreign policy, declare war, and conclude peace. Having consolidated the position of the conservative strata in the constitution and extended the political rights of the bourgeois classes, who were playing an increasingly important role in the economy, the regime gave legal shape to the ruling bloc of landowners and the bourgeoisie, and this largely determined the subsequent evolution of the state power structure in Afghanistan.

The Nadir Shah regime was confronted with the difficult problem of economic development. The events of 1928-1929 had exhausted state resources. In addition, the world economic crisis had a negative effect on Afghanistan's economy. The price of astrakhan, Afghanistan's main export item, dropped on the world market. The reduction of the price of silver on foreign markets led to a devaluation of the Afghan national currency. Seeking to replenish the treasury, the regime launched upon large-scale confiscation of property belonging to supporters of Bacha-i Saqao and started a campaign of reprisals. But the money collected was chiefly used to prop up the tribal khans who fought against Bacha-i Saqao.

The new regime was assisted financially by the Kabul merchants, who made generous donations to the state treasury and proposed a number of economic reforms. Their programme was drawn up by Abdul Majid Zabuli, one of the richest merchants in the country, who proposed that the development of agriculture and industry should begin without delay. As the ruling circles continued Amanullah Khan's policy of pooling isolated nationl capitals in *sherkats*, the trading bourgeoisie, which had gone through dramatic upheavals during the 1928-1929 political crisis, sought a closer alliance with the ruling elite which had defended its interests.

In contrast with the previous period, the merchants were, on the whole, in favour of the idea of *sherkats,* all the more so as the *sherkats* improved their position in the competition with foreign capital. The functioning of joint-stock companies required the establishment of a national credit institution which would help control the country's monetary and foreign trade markets. The first bank, Sherkat-i Ashami, with a capital exceeding 5 million afghanis, of which 4.5 million belonged to the state and the rest to Afghan merchants, was opened in Kabul in January 1931. The bank was to stabilise the exchange rate of the national currency and grant credit to merchants.[19] A year later a monopoly of the procurement and export of astrakhan was introduced and then transferred to the Afghan National Bank, an improved version of Sherkat-i Ashami. It was, in fact, a joint-stock company which, in addition to regulating money circulation in the country, was engaged in commercial transactions and had the monopoly of the export and import of certain goods.

Having established a national bank, the government set about organising *sherkats* with the direct participation of the Afghan National Bank, which was to become a shareholder. In the early 1930s, more than thirty large *sherkats* emerged in the country, bringing together a considerable part of national capital. Exercising a monopoly over the export and import of many goods, the bank and the *sherkats* sapped the trading power of foreign merchants. Afghan merchants, organised in *sherkats,* were granted numerous privileges. The unification of national trading capital in joint-stock companies speeded up the growth of internal capital accumulation. In 1936-1937, the total capital of the larger *sherkats* exceeded 90 million afghanis.[20]

In the foreign sphere, the government declared a policy of neutrality and equitable relations with all countries, which was registered in the 1931 constitution.

At the same time the regime of Nadir Shah was rather closely oriented on Britain. As has been already mentioned, Britain had supported Nadir Shah from the time he joined the struggle for the throne. With his coming to power his contacts with the British colonial authorities in India had grown still closer. This was seen in his negative attitude to the national liberation movement in the North-Western Border Province of India, which grew into an anti-colonial uprising in Peshawar in 1930. The regime of Nadir Shah prevented the Pashtun tribes in the border area of Afghanistan from joining the uprising and thereby helped the British colonial troops to suppress it. Nadir Shah feared that the anti-colonial movement in India, which could be described as democratic, could dangerously influence the situation in Afghanistan. Britain, for its part, rewarded Nadir Shah's services with military and financial aid.

However, Afghanistan, which had gone through an agonising political crisis, needed support for its national independence. That support came from the Soviet Union. On June 24, 1931, the Soviet-Afghan Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression was signed in Kabul for a term of five years, to be prolonged automatically every year. The treaty provided for non-interference by each country in the internal affairs of the other, mutual neutrality, should one of them be involved in a war, and settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

The treaty took pride of place in relations between the two countries, for it was a major international document imbued with a spirit of friendship and goodneighbourliness. It helped to expand Soviet-Afghan trade and economic relations. During the world economic crisis, when the volume of Afghan trade with capitalist countries fell sharply, its trade with the Soviet Union increased considerably. By 1932 the USSR had topped the list of the countries importing Afghan goods and was second biggest exporter to Afghanistan.[21] Furthermore, trade with the Soviet Union had a favourable effect on the country's economic growth, since the USSR purchased Afghan goods at fixed prices, regardless of changes on the world market. This helped Afghanistan to avoid the heavy losses which could otherwise have resulted from the general worsening of foreign trade conditions.

Afghanistan developed also its relations with other countries. The regime of Nadir Shah was especially interested in maintaining close contacts with Turkey and Iran, and signed friendship treaties with them in 1932. It established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Attempts were made to consolidate ties with Germany and France, and to use their economic potential. Little progress was made in this direction, however, after Afghanistan refused to grant them concessions. In 1930, a friendship treaty was signed with Japan, which, however, did not generate broad contacts between the two countries. The regime made an attempt to attract US capital to Afghanistan, and an Afghan mission was sent to the United States. But the US industrialists, concerned over their own economic difficulties at that time, showed no interest in Afghanistan. The period of active economic and political US expansion in Afghanistan began later, after World War II.

Socio-political life in the country revived. The system of administration was reorganised. A medical school was opened in 1932, which soon developed into a medical faculty and the nucleus of the future Kabul University. Newspapers and magazines made their appearance. However, the political situation in the country remained unstable. Severe persecution of the former associates of Amanullah Khan caused retaliatory actions by the opposition. In November 1933, Nadir Shah was assassinated by an Amanullah supporter, and power went to his son, Muhammad Zahir Shah.

Under the new shah the cabinet of ministers, headed by Nadir Shah's brother, Muhammad Hashim Khan, remained unchanged, and so did the guidelines of government policy. Concentration and centralisation of national capital was continuing apace. The activities of the Afghan National Bank and the *sherkats,* in which only Afghan nationals could be shareholders, totally undermined the role of foreign capital in Afghanistan's foreign trade. Foreign businessmen could not even act as intermediaries in Afghan foreign trade.

In the latter half of the 1930s, large *sherkats* were springing up in Kabul, Herat, Qandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other cities. With the participation of the Afghan National Bank several *sherkats* were set up to conduct trade with the Soviet Union. By 1936 most of the merchants in the country had been shareholders in the *sherkats,* though they continued independent commercial activities of their own. In the late 1930s, the Afghan National Bank began to play a much greater role as a regulator of foreign trade operations. Consequently, the top men in national trading capital began to exert increasing political influence. Their leader, Abdul Majid, the bank's president, was appointed Minister of Economics. The bank gradually abandoned trade operations and began to invest capital in *sherkats* and to grant credits to them. The accumulation of capital was carried out through the Afghan National Bank and its subsidiary *sherkats*, whose activity now extended to a considerable part of trade operations on the home market and to practically the whole of foreign trade.

Private capital was entering the sphere of production with reluctance, preferring trade, which was more profitable. Therefore in the 1930s, when the meagre state finances were being consumed mainly by non-productive spending, industrial development was very slow. The largest allocations from the state budget went into the building of roads and small irrigation systems. Of the few industrial enterprises built in that period, the most important were the cotton mill in Jabal Os-Saraj and the silk spinning factory in Qandahar, both fitted out with equipment purchased back in 1928 by Amanullah Khan, and also the textile combine in Pol-e Khomri, whose construction was financed by the government and the trade-industrial *sherkat* Nasaji, and a few small electricity plants.

In those years considerable aid to Afghanistan in building its national industry came from the Soviet Union. The cotton-cleaning plants in the north—in Qunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Imam Sahib and other cities—were built with Soviet assistance.[22] Soviet-Afghan relations, based on the principles of goodneighbourliness, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, were becoming increasingly significant for Afghanistan. Trade between the two countries was growing rapidly. The trade policy pursued by the Soviet Union was favourable to Afghanistan. The USSR also assisted Afghanistan in the development of agriculture, and specifically in combating agricultural pests.

In the late 1930s, international tension escalated. Considering Afghanistan's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and the other countries of the "axis" sought to expand their influence there. To that end, wide use was made of Germany's economic contacts with Afghanistan. In 1936, for instance, Afghanistan received credit to the value of 27 million marks for the purchase of German goods, Germany also provided Afghanistan with military equipment. Nazi agents penetrated Afghan state establishments and industry, and also the Afghan National Bank, under the guise of "advisers", "consultants", and "experts".[23]

While expanding relations with Germany and its allies, the regime of Muhammad Zahir Shah assumed no military-political obligations, and in September 1939, soon after the start of the Second World War, Afghanistan officially announced its neutrality. Despite this, however, Germany sought to turn Afghanistan into a bridgehead for military actions against the USSR and British India. Its agents infiltrated the area of the Pashtun tribes in the south of Afghanistan and in the north-western strip of Indian territory, supplying them with weapons and money. In 1940, Germany asked the Afghan government to organise an uprising of the tribes in north-west India against the British authorities to force Britain to withdraw some of its troops from Europe. In return, Afghanistan was to annex a number of north-western regions of India, in particular Sind, Baluchistan, the West Punjab and Kashmir.[24] However, the Afghan government turned down the proposal.

Nonetheless, Kabul's policy of manoeuvring between the imperialist powers created a favourable situation for nazi agents. Operating in Afghanistan as experts and businessmen, they were engaged in extensive anti-Soviet activities, forming sabotage groups from among counter-revolutionary emigrés of the early days of Soviet power and smuggling them over to Soviet territory.

After the treacherous attack of nazi Germany on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the actions of nazi agents in Afghanistan created a real threat to Afghan neutrality and contradicted the terms of the 1931 Soviet-Afghan Treaty on Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression. In October 1941, the Soviet Government sent the Government of Afghanistan a note requesting that the latter curb anti-Soviet activities by nazi agents. A similar request was made by the British Government. The Afghan Government then decided to expel from the country all German and Italian nationals, except for officials at diplomatic missions, and soon they left Afghanistan.

In November 1941, a Loy Jirgah session was held in Kabul to decide upon the foreign policy to be pursued in the complex conditions created by the Second World War, and it reaffirmed the country's policy of complete neutrality.

The Second World War seriously damaged Afghanistan's economy. The disruption of world economic ties brought about an increase in world prices and inflation. The volume of Afghanistan's foreign trade was sharply reduced. British India, from which the main deliveries of consumer goods for Afghanistan were coming, had, in fact, a monopoly of Afghan imports. The geography of Afghan exports also shrank noticeably. The marketing of traditional export goods now involved enormous difficulties. Availing itself of that situation, trading capital shifted the burden of declining foreign trade onto the producers of exports and the consumers of imported goods. The trading bourgeoisie was literally robbing them by widening the gap between procurement and marketing prices.[25] The Afghan National Bank and the *sherkats* associated with it now held a monopoly of Afghan exports and greatly increased their capital. The reduction in the amount of goods coming from abroad caused a steep rise in prices and inflation.

The war and the economic difficulties it brought in its wake frustrated Afghanistan's attempts to fulfil its first five-year plan of economic development, adopted in 1940. During the war the rate of industrial construction slowed down and the volume of work at various irrigation projects was reduced.

In the countryside the landowners, money-lenders, merchants and local officials continued to buy up the land owned by peasants and the state with the result that more and more peasants were becoming landless.

The general worsening of the economic situation in the country, which hit the working people, artisans and the small bourgeoisie the hardest, provoked dissatisfaction among various sections of the population. In 1944-1945, there were frequent uprisings among Pashtun peasants and poor livestock breeders which were suppressed by troops.

The political situation in the country was growing increasingly tense. By the end of the war first signs of social conflict appeared, caused by the increasing contradiction between, on the one hand, the largest possessors of trading and credit capital and the feudal landowners associated with them, who in the grim years of the war acted in their own self-seeking interests, and, on the other, the broad mass of working people and the democratic sections of society who carried all the burden of wartime. The rout of nazi Germany and the emergence of People's Democracies in

Europe had a telling effect on public sentiments in Afghanistan, causing the growth of political activity. Social discontent now involved not only politically active intellectuals, but also a large part of democratically-minded masses.

Afghanistan After the Second World War

The economic difficulties caused by the war resulted in a serious deterioration of the economic position of the bulk of the population. The policy pursued by the ruling circles—feudal landowners and top merchants linked with land, whose chief interest lay in profitable commerce—was ever more in contradiction with the economic interests of numerous sections of the middle and petty bourgeoisie and the part of the intelligentsia closely related to them. The growing economic potential of the large *sherkats* added to their political influence. At the same time there was an increasing tendency for them to monopolise political power.

The emergence of the world socialist system, the rising tide of the national liberation movement in Asia and Africa, and the continuing disintegration of the colonial system also had a great impact on the political situation in Afghanistan.

The aggravation of social contradictions compelled the authorities to take some measures. In particular, they restricted some of the monopoly rights of the large *sherkats* to foreign trade, and set up elective town councils. But these superficial measures did not affect the socio-political structure, and so, popular discontent continued to spread.

The worsening of the economic situation was accompanied by the large-scale penetration of US monopolies into Afghanistan. This process started with the signing in 1946 of a governmental agreement with the American Morrison-Knudsen company on the construction of an irrigation system in the south of the country, on prospecting for mineral resources, road building, personnel training, and on small construction projects. But the planned construction was not done in time and the expenses exceeded the calculated costs. Afghanistan had to seek foreign loans.

The increasing political tensions in the country, combined with economic, and later political pressure by the USA, complicated the situation still further. In 1946, the government of Muhammad Hashim Khan resigned. The new cabinet was headed by Shah Mahmud Khan, the king's another uncle. The widening rift between the bourgeoisie and the landowners, on the one hand, and the small producers in town and country, on the other, gave rise to oppositional sentiments, which found expression in various political movements and groups defending the interests of the broad middle sections of the urban population, and to some extent of the poor sections.

The principal demands put forward by these movements included abolition of economic privileges for large monopoly trading associations, democratisation of socio-political life, adoption of a new constitution, and better opportunities for the petty and middle bourgeoisie.

The spread of ideas reflecting the interests of the middle strata of society led to the formation of the political organisation Wikh-i Zalmaiyan (Awakened Youth). Its socially variegated membership did not exceed 100. It included people from among the petty bourgeoisie, clerks, intellectuals and Muslim clergy. The organisation was headed by Muhammad Rasul Khan Pushtun, a small landowner from Qandahar. Among the most active members of the movement were Nur Muhammad Taraki, who headed its radical left wing, Abdurrauf Benawa, Abdulhai Habibi and Gul Pacha Ulfat. At the initial stage its members were engaged mainly in educational activities, but in the late 1940s they joined the political struggle and took part in the 1949 parliamentary elections. As a result, in the National Assembly of the seventh convocation there appeared a group of deputies whose activities were based on the ideas of the Awakened Youth. They used parliament as a platform from which to fight for their demands, and at the same time, they sought to turn the National Assembly into an effective organ of power which would regulate the work of the state apparatus.

Radical circles demanded freedom of the press in order to propagate the ideas of the opposition. In January 1951, the government adopted a new law on the press, allowing the publication of private newspapers and magazines. Immediately following the promulgation of the new law there appeared private newspapers calling themselves national.

The appearance of the private press led to a polarisation of the political forces brought together by common oppositional views. A short while before the private newspapers appeared, other political groupings were beginning to emerge in addition to the Awakened Youth, though with a similar political orientation. Most significant among them were Nida-yi Khalq (The Voice of the People) and Watan (Homeland). In 1951, they began to issue their own newspapers under the same names.

Prior to this, Wikh-i Zalmaiyan had begun to put out its own newspaper. The first issue of *Angar*, so named after its publisher and editor Faiz Muhammad Angar, an official of the Ministry of Economics, came off the press on March 1, 1950. *Angar* was described as "a national, literary, social, and political newspaper". Its first editorial said it would serve the people, helping them overcome their age-old backwardness. The paper, said the editorial, had to seek, with the help of "educated individuals sympathetic to the people and the awakened youth", to identify the causes of the people's backwardness, to enlighten them and find ways of eliminating the backwardness". The authors of the leading articles, which contained political criticism, were the leaders of the movement. The first issue carried an article by Taraki entitled "The Wish of the People. What Do We Want?". It expressed the main demands of the opposition: "bread, clothes (later with the addition of the word "housing" this became the chief slogan of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), work, and equal opportunities for all in terms of social services".

The publishers saw their mission in devoted service to "the backward nation" in the struggle against "traitors and oppressors", who "do harm to the people, by sacrificing its interests to their personal benefit", and in the struggle against racial discrimination, and for national unity. They believed that these goals could be attained through awakening and unification of the nation, establishment of a constitutional monarchical regime, formation of a national government responsible to parliament, and participation of all classes in public affairs.[26] Social progress and the improvement of the living standards of the people, the publishers believed, could be achieved only if the people took an active part in socio-political and economic life, and also in state affairs, through their own political parties. One of the main tasks to be accomplished, wrote A. Mahmudi, the author of the article "What Do We Want? (Aspirations of the People)", was the formation of a "truly democratic government", which would "put the destiny of the people into their own hands". "The primary condition of genuinely democratic government is the creation of national-democratic parties, and on their basis the holding of free elections, and the election of deputies trusted by the people. Since these deputies would then form the government, a majority rule would prevail and, consequently, vital problems would be solved according to the will of the people, and thus their happiness would be ensured."[27] These objectives were to be achieved within the framework of constitutional monarchy.

The economic part of the programme contained mainly criticism of the existing state of affairs, but made no clear-cut proposals. It drew special attention to the conditions of the poor sections and demanded the abolition of forced labour (*begar*). It also suggested ways of improving the national economy. For instance, Babrak Gostali, the author of an article in the *Angar*, proposed to cut the import of luxuries and increase spending on the development of local industry, to care more for the workers, to combat unemployment, and go over to planned economic development, with the opinion of the "toiling people" duly taken into account.[28] Some members of the liberal wing in the movement, while speaking about the people's poverty, pinned their hopes on the monarch's good will. Thus Abdurrauf Benawa wrote in one of his articles: "Those who are used to sitting in a walnut chair and looking at the world through the windows of their cars, have no idea who 'the people' are. And if they are told that the people go barefooted, they would reply that it is more comfortable to pray that way. But if they came to know the people better, they would see that ordinary people walk barefooted because of their poverty. They don't even know that there is not a single person out of a hundred who is satisfied with his conditions. The only hope of the people is the beloved and democratic king. Therefore all patriots, the awakened youth and other enlightened people see in the shah the only and true servant of the nation, and its leader."[29]

The paper gave much prominence to the role of youth in society. In the "Appeal to the Afghan Youth" it called for the younger generation to awaken and rally together in the struggle to win happiness for the people.[30] Great significance was attached to the Students' Union, founded in 1950, which contributed to the general enlightenment effort.

Thus, the programme of the Wikh-i Zalmaiyan movement basically contained a demand that state political institutions be democratised, and criticism of the people's economic conditions.

Another group, Watan, which emerged in 1950, adopted a similar position, but advanced a broader spectrum of social, political and economic demands. Its social make-up was also variegated, including people from various sections of the petty bourgeoisie, clerks and intellectuals. The leaders of the movement were Mir Muhammad Siddiq Farhang, its ideologist, Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar and Ahmad Ali Kohzad, both well-known historians, and General Fateh. The Watan group had over 100 members.

In March 1951, it began to issue the newspaper *Watan*. Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar became its publisher and Ali Horush, its chief editor. The latter was soon replaced by M. M. S. Farhang. The first editorial announced the aims of the movement: to popularise the principles of democracy under a constitutional monarchy in every sphere of public life, and to achieve a number of bourgeois liberties, such as freedom to form political organisations, freedom to choose a profession and freedom of movement, personal immunity, and religious and national equality. The paper called for accelerated economic growth and was opposed to "the concentration of capital in private hands". The latter can hardly be viewed as a rejection of private property. Rather it was a call to restrict the economic privileges of large private companies. A speech by Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar in parliament shows this only too well. "Private monopoly exists in the country," he said, "and the profits from it, obtained through the exploitation of the masses, have been pocketed by a few moneylenders and monopolists. This means that monopoly must be taken out of private hands and given to the state. As a result of 20 years of economic activity by a number of monopolist *sherkats*, capital has been concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. The middle sections of the merchants are being brought to ruin."[31] Demanding a restriction of the economic power of large trading capital, the members of the Watan movement insisted on the provision of favourable conditions for the enterprise of the small and middle bourgeoisie, and the development of the domestic crafts.

The paper's publishers paid particular attention to social problems, analysing the social structure of the population and assessing the position of its various sections. It wrote a good deal about the conditions of the peasants, who accounted for 90 per cent of the population. "Speaking in terms of material and cultural conditions, the Afghan peasant is at the lowest possible level. He is illiterate, sick, sometimes hungry, and always barefooted. He has many debts and no work implements,"[32] wrote Farhang in the article "Consolidating the Peasantry".

Identifying the causes of the impoverished living conditions of the peasants, he pointed to large-scale, private landownership and usury. The author remonstrated against the situation in the countryside and suggested ways of improving it by setting up peasant cooperatives and founding an agricultural bank to grant credits to the peasants. He proposed also that the size of privately-owned land should be limited and the landownership system revised.[33] He considered a change in ownership system to be the central reform. However, he wanted it effected not through political struggle for the peasants' rights, but through the adoption of relevant legislation by the good will of the government.[34]

An important element in the programme of the Watan group, as it was in those of other similar movements, was political demands, the main one being a change in the government system through the adoption of "proper" laws and adherence to them. "We are for constitutional monarchy," wrote Ghubar in his article "The Rusting Body of the State". "But if we want to preserve territorial integrity, independence, security and progress, and to preclude all kinds of disturbances and anarchy, which only cause dislocation and intensify reaction, we must have a government answerable to the people, and trusted by the people."[35] The idea of forming such a government, the paper stressed, was backed up by the people, which was confirmed by the paper's reader Yar Muhammad Khan Pushtun. "Our people," he said, "are for constitutional monarchy. They sincerely respect the Shah. But the people want only a people's government, that is, a government elected from the people and for the people."[36]

The paper's publishers came out vigorously in favour of democratisation of political institutions by revising and renovating the constitution, approving a new law on the press, ensuring free parliamentary elections, granting the right to form political parties and trade unions, changing the legal procedure, and separating the three powers—legislative, executive and judicial.

In contrast to the Wikh-i Zalmaiyan, the Watan movement attached great significance to foreign policy. Its paper carried a world events column, not merely stating facts but also voicing support for national liberation movements and struggle against colonialism, in particular the struggle for the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and Iranian oil. Its contributors linked the strengthening of independence, peace and security with major social problems: guarantees of social justice and democracy, development of education and health protection, elimination of illiteracy and opposition to despotism, and broader participation by the people in the running of the state.[37]

In this period there was yet another group in the country which published the newspaper *Nida-yi Khalq* (The Voice of the People). Judging by its social composition, it gravitated more towards the democratic strata of society: intellectuals, low-ranking officials, handicraftsmen and shop-keepers—not more than 200 members. Its founder, leader and ideologist was Dr. Abdurrahman Mahmudi. The group's leadership included Maulana Khan Muhammad Hasta of Mazar-i Sharif; Muhammad Naim Shayan, an official at the Ministry of Finance; engineer Wali Ahmad Atai; and Mahmudi's brothers, Lieutenant Muhammad Aman, Muhammad Rahim, a physician, and Muhammad Azim, an official.

Dr. Abdurrahman Mahmudi was the publisher and the author of most of the articles printed in *Nida-yi Khalq*, while Wali Ahmad Atai was the editor. The first editorial was devoted to the aims of the movement, declaring that it was "the servant and leader of the people, and basing itself on the principles of democracy and the struggle for the people's rights". Appealing to the people's interests, the paper set itself the task of showing them "the way to achieve government by the people and for the people". Like the other groupings that had been founded on the basis of the Wikh-i Zalmaiyan, the *Nida-yi Khalq* group based its political programme on the slogans of democracy and social justice, which amounted to demands for "the establishment of a free parliament, free parliamentary elections, an equilibrium between the legislative, executive and judicial powers", and the introduction of a number of bourgeois liberties: freedom of the press, and freedom of expression, personal immunity and the inviolability of the home.

Rejecting armed struggle, the *Nida-yi Khalq* group believed that democracy could be guaranteed by promulgating democratic laws, by ensuring that the people knew and defended their rights. Denouncing despotism and tyranny, the paper declared that it was its duty to struggle "against exploitation and the enemies of the people's interests".[38] It suggested that the people should take part in running the country through political parties. The party of the majority in parliament should form a government trusted by the people. In parliament it would be confronted by a left-wing minority, which was to act as a regulator of government activity, should the latter begin to "play with the will of the people".[39] In other words, it proposed fighting for a bourgeois-democratic form of government, which in that phase of the country's historical development would be a step foreward in the evolution of its political system.

In the *Nida-yi Khalq's* programme considerable emphasis was on social problems, and the articles on these problems were sharp and to the point. It levelled strong criticism at the existing situation, exposing the country's social ills. The archaic system of government, arbitrary rule by officials, poverty among ordinary people, bribery and embezzlement in the bureaucratic apparatus, forced labour, economic stagnation, and the total illiteracy of the population were all targets of attack. As there was strict censorship, the newspaper presented its material from different points of view in editorials, and in commentaries on various facts, in readers' letters and even in the reports by an agency called Del-i Haq (The Heart of the Truth). This enabled it to bypass the obstacles erected by censorship and to speak in defence of the people's rights. Thus, in the article "The Rights of the People!!!" Dr. Mahmudi wrote: "If we tell the people that they have the right, without fear and without interference by the authorities, to elect its representatives to parliament, to form a parliament and a government responsible to the people, that is, to make state affairs and parliamentary debates public, then, naturally, the people will start to fight for their rights. But since the struggle by the people for their rights is regarded here as a violation of security and a threat to national unity... I must apologise to the reader for not saying any more on this matter."[40]

Like the other groups, *Nida-yi Khalq* came out against the large-scale entrepreneurs' monopoly of economic power. Having named countries in which the key sectors of the economy had been nationalised, the paper urged the need to do away with the privileges of a handful of millionaires, "exercising their sway in the sphere of astrakhan, sugar and petrol". The publishers saw one of the causes of the people's impoverishment in the fact that "money and land are being concentrated in the hands of a limited number of people, i.e., becoming their private monopoly".[41]

The paper also wrote on foreign policy issues. The Afghan-Pakistani relations were deteriorating, and this was being exploited by international reaction in order to bring pressure to bear on Afghanistan. The paper declared that the struggle should be aimed not only at strengthening political independence, but also at "ensuring economic and social independence". It attacked the policy of Pakistan's ruling circles whom it called "servants of despotism and colonialism" who, resorting to "intrigues and deceit, bring discord and schism into the camp of the champions of progress and national unity".[42]

Advancing demands similar to those of other groups, *Nida-yi Khalq* displayed at the same time a greater degree of radicalism in raising the most urgent problems related to the country's socio-economic development.

One of the forms of opposition by the bourgeois democrats at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the

1950s was their parliamentary activity. A group of oppositionally-minded deputies had emerged within parliament in 1949. The Angar group was represented by Gul Pacha Ulfat, Abdulhai Habibi, and Faiz Muhammad Angar; Watan was represented by Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar, and *Nida-yi Khalq*, by Abdurrahman Mahmudi—all formally united in the National Front. Though they belonged to different political trends, they all adopted the same or a similar position on the main issues. In their speeches in parliament they accused the government of violating the constitution. The most heated debate was over the requisitioning of grain from the population, which was extremely harsh for the peasants. Despite a decision by the majority of the deputies to reject the relevant bill, the government still demanded that the population sell grain to the state at low prices. Another violation of the constitution was the widespread practice of forced labour (*begar*), mainly in construction and road building. The opposition castigated the state organs for breaking the law banning *begar*. Many speeches were made on the activities of US monopolies in Afghanistan. Deputy Abdurrahman Mahmudi expressed the common view of the opposition when he declared: "The agreement with the Morrison-Knudsen company has done great harm to the people and to the country's economy."[43]

The activity of the opposition, however, did not bring about any substantial changes in state administration or in the economic structure. However, due to the activities of the opposition groups and their representatives in parliament, the chief demands of the opposition were instrumental in determining the main direction of the political struggle waged by various forces in society. One of the results of the opposition's parliamentary activity was a more clear-cut formulation of the basic tasks of the deputies defending the people's interests. Such a formulation was published by the Watan leadership and included the following demands: implementation of the principles of democracy; amendment and extension of the constitution; elaboration of a new and democratic election law; separation of the three powers; freedom to form political parties and organisations; elimination of obstacles in the way of developing a free press; abolition of *begar*; a ban on private and bank monopolies; creation of an agricultural bank and peasant cooperatives; development of industry; consolidation of national unity by cancelling illegitimate privileges; and application of the principles of equality and brotherhood.[44]

In 1951, another private newspaper of a national-bourgeois trend, *Wulus* (People) was issued by the publisher Gul Pacha Ulfat. The paper exposed plunder committed by the ruling circles and analysed the appalling living conditions of the people. However, it proposed nothing concrete to change the situation, only appealing to the reason of the powers that be, in an attempt to make them respond to the people's sufferings.[45] The publishers expressed loyalty to the king, who was portrayed as defender of national interests.

In the summer of 1951, despite the lack of corresponding legislation, the leaders of the *Nida-yi Khalq* trend made an attempt to organise their followers into a political party to be named Khalq (The People), and in the last issue of their newspaper they published their programme. Having taken as its basis general principles of democracy, the party declared that it was committed to "forming a people's government, elected by the people and acting in the interests of the people". The Khalq supporters saw the achievement of social justice via the elimination of oppression and exploitation as one of the chief ways of winning democracy. It paid great attention to observing and propagating Islam principles. In the opinion of the party's ideologists, free elections to parliament, election of genuinely popular representatives, formation of a new government which would be responsible to parliament, a revision of the constitution and adoption of fair laws, were the main stages in attaining the basic objectives of its programme.

The founder and leader of the Khalq party was Dr. Mahmudi who headed its ten-member leadership. The party was small and had no broad ties with the masses, its leaders conducting their propaganda work primarily among students at the law and medical faculties of Kabul University. In the spring of 1952 the party ceased to exist.

In the late 1940s, students in Kabul joined in political activity. In April 1950, the Students' Union of Kabul University was set up whose purpose was to bring about the political awakening of intellectuals and students. Its members used the stage and held various conferences to spread their views. They demanded reforms in socio-economic and cultural life and in the sphere of state administration, and also freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The student movement was clearly influenced by the oppositional bourgeois-democratic groups.

Some of the oppositional trends used religious slogans. One of these was the illegal group headed by Haji Naim, commandant of Kabul. It included officers and minor officials, members of national and religious minorities, and religious fanatics. Their aim was to smash the outdated absolute monarchy and establish a caliphate. In March 1950, the group was discovered by the authorities and disbanded; more than 20 of its activists were sentenced to long terms in prison.

Together with various bourgeois-democratic trends, oppositional activity began in those strata of the ruling class which were compelled to reckon with the growing demands of the middle and petty bourgeoisie now emerging onto the political scene. They banded together to form the National Club whose founder and president was Sardar Muhammad Daoud, the king's cousin. The club was financed by Minister of Economics Abdul Majid Zabuli, the richest merchant in Afghanistan. The oppositional activity of the Daoud group did not go beyond attempts to weaken the position of the government of Shah Mahmud Khan and to give his post of prime minister to Daoud himself. However, when the National Club members failed to win over national patriotic leaders, they attempted to split the opposition.

The activity of various oppositional groups reached its peak in 1952. In the election to the parliament of the eighth convocation, held in April that year, not a single candidate of the opposition was returned. The leaders of the bourgeois-democratic groups responded by staging a massive demonstration of protest in Kabul against the falsification of the parliamentary election and interference by the authorities in the election campaign. The demonstrators were joined by Kabul students, headed by Babrak Karmal, a student at the law faculty of the university. The demonstration was dispersed by troops.

Shortly thereafter the authorities launched a large-scale offensive against the opposition movement. The private newspapers *Angar, Watan* and *Nida-yi Khalq* were banned, the oppositional groups dispersed, and their leaders imprisoned. Nur Muhammad Taraki was sent to the United States as press attaché at the Afghan embassy. Abdulhai Habibi left the country some time before these events and settled in Pakistan, where he issued the journal *Azad Afghanistan* (Free Afghanistan) criticising the royal regime. At home he was labelled a traitor and was deprived of Afghan nationality. Abdurrauf Benawa was deported to India. Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Dr. Mahmudi was sentenced to nine years. In 1962 he was released, but he soon died of tuberculosis. Many activists and supporters of the opposition were sent to prison, Babrak Karmal among them.

The opposition, short-lived as it was, greatly influenced the country's social development. The growing demands of various sections of the middle and petty bourgeoisie, and the middle urban strata, reflected in the programmes of a number of opposition movements, showed that the policy pursued by the government, which catered only for the interests of large landowners and the top echelons of trading capital, was a failure.

After the Second World War the foreign policy of Afghanistan changed somewhat. Strategically important, Afghanistan figured prominently in US plans for economic penetration into the countries of the Middle East. Immediately after the war the United States won a monopoly position in Afghan foreign trade, specifically in the export of astrakhan, by imposing its own terms of trade on Afghanistan. Other spheres of the Afghan economy were also involved. As has already been mentioned, in 1946 the US embassy imposed an agreement with the US Morrison-Knudsen firm. But the firm failed to meet its commitments and key projects were not completed by the agreed time, i.e., by 1949. Furthermore, the original estimate of $17,5 million was exceeded. The Afghan government had to turn for aid to the US government. In 1949, Afghanistan received a US loan to the tune of $21 million, having agreed to prolong the terms of the agreement with Morrison-Knudsen which, in turn, insisted on vastly increased allocations on its projects.[46] The construction of irrigation facilities dragged on for many years, delaying land reclamation and bringing into question the ultimate results of the firm's activities which thus became, in fact, a major channel of US economic penetration, which enmeshed the country in various obligations and debts. To reinforce its position in Afghanistan, in 1951 the USA concluded an agreement with it on technical cooperation under the Truman Programme. So Afghanistan found itself entangled in highly destructive obligations.

The action of Morrison-Knudsen evoked an angry outcry in the country. The issue was debated in the press and in parliament. The state commission set up in 1950 revealed numerous facts proving that the company had caused great harm to the Afghan economy.

In the political sphere, the USA aimed at drawing the country into its zone of influence and undermining its traditional course of neutrality. In the early 1950s the USA increased its efforts to involve Afghanistan in the aggressive military-political groupings being set up at the time.

Western imperialism used the Pashtun issue as a means of pressure on Afghanistan. A short while before the formation of the states of India and Pakistan (August 1947) Afghanistan raised the question of the future of the Pashtun population in the north-west of British India. The Afghan government, backed up by public opinion, demanded self-determination for the Pashtuns living beyond the Afghan borders. But Britain refused to consider the matter. After the formation of the state of Pakistan its ruling circles, denying the Pashtun the right to self-determination, suppressed the Pashtun national movement, which worsened relations with Afghanistan.

In the postwar years, when the imperialist colonial system was falling apart and national liberation movements were gaining in strength and scope, the Soviet Union firmly pursued a policy of expanding relations with Aghanistan. In 1946, an agreement was signed on border questions, demonstrating the Soviet Government's wish to develop bilateral ties. In 1950, an inter-governmental trade-and-payments agreement was concluded and this served as a basis for the subsequent trade relations between the two countries.

The expansion of goodneighbourly relations with the Soviet Union helped to strengthen Afghanistan's sovereignty and created a favourable opportunity for stepping up its foreign policy efforts. In November 1946, Afghanistan joined the United Nations and supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1950, it signed friendship treaties with India and Lebanon, established political contacts with Syria, and recognised the People's Republic of China. In 1950-1951, efforts were made to resolve Afghan-Iranian differences on the use of the Helmand River waters.

Meanwhile the economic situation in the country was going from bad to worse, particularly in agriculture. The prevalence of pre-capitalist forms of exploitation in the countryside hampered the growth of the productive forces. The increasing marketability of agricultural output in those conditions caused a still greater differentiation of the peasantry. Usurious operations, gaining in scope, led to the expropriation of peasant land. The migration of landless peasants to the towns became a constant process, but the absence of developed industry offered little opportunity of employment and the migrant peasants joined the army of the unemployed. Government attempts to take the edge off the agrarian problem by resettling farmers and seminomads from southern to northern regions with large resources of arable land failed to produce the expected economic and social effect, and only caused grave political and national friction. The government's hopes that large areas of land would soon come under cultivation in the basin of the rivers Helmand and Arghandab, where irrigation work by Morrison-Knudsen was planned, were also dashed.

The worsening situation as regards Afghan exports, a result of US attempts to monopolise Afghan foreign trade, and the difficulties of transporting export goods across Pakistan because of Afghan-Pakistani tension, badly affected the economic situation in the country. Heavy spending on the import of consumer goods impaired home trade. The government's efforts to find more resources by increasing taxes on small-scale production, livestock, etc. caused a rise in prices, particularly on food. Hopes that large trading *sherkats* would take part in the seven-year economic development plan, announced in 1946, were not justified. The *sherkats*, receiving financial and other privileges as part of the measures to stimulate their industrial activity, preferred more profitable trade and carefully avoided investment in industrial development. The acute food crisis made the government turn for aid to the USA, which granted Afghanistan a loan in 1953 for the purchase of American grain. Thus, Afghanistan found itself in ever greater economic dependence on the USA.

In a situation of economic setbacks and political instability the Shah Mahmud government resigned. The new cabinet was formed by Sardar Muhammad Daoud, the king's cousin. The character of political power did not change, but new people were brought into state administration bodies, people who took into account the opinion of the politically active sections of society and the changed international situation, and who were prepared to effect certain changes to bolster up the positions of the exploiter upper crust. However, such changes were impossible without developing the economy and the productive forces. On the whole, the programme of the Daoud cabinet was designed to promote the growth of capitalist relations, with the increasing participation of the state in economic activity. The policy of so-called guided economy announced by Muhammad Daoud offered a chance to expand the social base of the regime.

Among the first measures taken by the government was a change in the credit system, made through the banks newly established in 1954. Middle and small businessmen were now able to receive credit. The creation of the agricultural bank, which granted loans at lower interest rates than the money-lenders, revived agricultural production and somewhat restricted money-lending activity, though it was unable to compete successfully with the latter as the bank's resources were too meagre. The purchasing prices of astrakhan, wool, and industrial crops were increased, and so were the loans granted to the producers. Credit cooperatives were set up to facilitate commercial activities in agriculture. Though all these measures concerned only the upper stratum of the peasantry, they nevertheless stimulated to some extent the growth of agricultural production. The establishment of banks with mixed capital, which then took part in the activities of the bigger trade-industrial *sherkats*, increased state participation in economic development.

By 1954 the government was making wider use of foreign capital to develop the national economy. Foreign companies, primarily American, West German, and Japanese, which sought ways of investing their capital directly, became more active in the country. The Afghan international airlines company, Aryana, was set up in 1954 with the participation of Panamerican capital. In the same year the West German electrotechnical company Siemens moved into the Afghan market, flooded the country with its goods and opened a maintenance and repair plant. Japanese and West German companies took part in the construction of the Franklin printing press for the Ministry of Education. A ceramics factory was built in the city of Qunduz with the help of Japanese capital. According to the law on foreign investment, adopted in April 1954, not less than 51 per cent of the shares in mixed companies with foreign capital went to the Afghan side.[47]

To increase the revenues from domestic resources, new laws were devised on income tax paid by private industrialists and trade-industrial companies, and measures were taken to improve the accounting system. In particular, a school of accountancy was opened in 1953, together with courses for accounting clerks.

In 1954, preparatory work began prior to drawing up economic development plans. To this end, a consultative council was set up at the Ministry of Finance. It included economic, commercial, financial and technical experts and was headed by General Abdurrahim-zai, adviser to the Daoud cabinet. After a protracted analysis of the economic situation in the country, and consultations at the Ministry of Finance, various committees were set up to deal with finance, trade, mining, agriculture, transport and communications. The committees were to draw up specific proposals to be included in the general economic development plan.[48] In addition, a department of economics was set up at the same Ministry to draw up a state budget and supervise state spending. To stimulate foreign trade, the Pashtany Tejaraty Bank (Afghan Commercial Bank) was opened, with an authorised capital of 125 million afghanis,49 and the so-called building fund, which lent money to officials with housing problems, was reorganised into construction and hypothecary bank financing civil construction.

During the Muhammad Daoud government trading and transport companies mushroomed all over the country: by the start of the 1960s there had already been 185 private and mixed firms, with 1,900 large- and middle-scale traders operating in home and foreign trade.[50]

The economic policy announced by the Daoud government suited the purposes of the ruling circles, which was to develop capitalism in the country under the state's unconditional control.

In the early 1950s, Afghanistan was still experiencing economic difficulties, which compelled it to turn to the USA for aid. In 1954, the US government granted Afghanistan a loan of $18.5 million to finance the delayed construction of the Helmand Project,[51] thereby increasing its influence in the country. Disillusionment was spreading in Afghanistan over the activities of the Western monopolies, which were of almost no use to the Afghan economy but only derived huge benefits for themselves.

In this situation, economic and trade ties with the Soviet Union were becoming ever more important. In 1954, agreements were signed between the two countries on the construction of a large bakery and an asphalt and concrete-mixing factory in Kabul. The construction of these two large enterprises was highly appreciated by the Afghan public, which noted the Soviet contribution to the development of the Afghan economy. Soviet-Afghan cooperation proved to be a major factor strengthening the national sovereignty of Afghanistan and its international position in a situation of incessant pressure from the West, which wanted to force Afghanistan to follow in the wake of its policies. The expansion of relations with the USSR and other socialist countries* was significant for Afghanistan in that the situation in the Middle East in the mid-1950s was causing great damage to the interests of that country in the area. The fact that in 1954 a US-Pakistani treaty on American military aid to Pakistan was signed alarmed public opinion and the ruling circles in Afghanistan, which regarded it as a threat to peace and security in the region. After the conclusion of the Turkish-Pakistani pact under US aegis in 1954, Afghanistan was increasingly pressurised into joining the pact and giving up its neutrality. At the same time wide use was made of the anti-Soviet propaganda ploy of a "threat from the north". However, Afghanistan clearly stated that it was not going to join any military-political blocs.

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* Czechoslovak-Afghan agreements on trade, payments and credit for the construction of various industrial projects in Afghanistan were signed in 1954 in Kabul.

The stepping up of US military-strategic efforts provoked a negative response in Afghanistan. The military aid given by US imperialism to Pakistan was regarded there as an attempt to turn the North-Western Border Province of Pakistan, populated mostly by Pashtuns, into a bridgehead for anti-Afghan strategic schemes. In Afghanistan, calls for support to the Pashtun national liberation movement in that province became ever more insistent. The population on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border had much in common in ethnic terms. The idea of the national unity of all Pashtuns was in the air, which showed that, as the bourgeois nation was taking shape, a national-bourgeois ideology was emerging in Afghanistan. Actions in support of the Pashtuns' right to self-determination were now often accompanied by anti-colonial statements, which were becoming part of public thinking. The movement of the Pashtuns across the border in Pakistan was viewed as part and parcel of the international anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movement.[52]

In 1954, the Daoud government announced the termination of the 1921 Anglo-Afghan treaty. In the summer of 1954, the elders of some of the Pashtun tribes living on both sides of the border, to whom the Afghan authorities promised every support in their struggle for national rights, held a meeting. Afghanistan's official position on the Pashtun issue amounted to the demand that the Pashtuns living in the territory of Pakistan should be granted the right to self-determination. It was stressed that the Afghan official circles were prepared to settle this matter with Pakistan through peaceful, political negotiations.

The Afghan posture on the Pashtun issue was a major component of its neutrality and non-participation in military blocs as expressed in Afghanistan's negative attitude to the Baghdad Pact set up in 1955 and in its active role in the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries, at which it joined the countries that championed peace and international cooperation.

Tension over the Pashtun issue built up after the Pakistani government decided in 1955 to create a single province of West Pakistan, which was to comprise all the administrative units that existed in the western part of that state, including those populated by Pashtuns. The national organisations of the Pakistani Pashtuns regarded this action as a further infringement of their right to national autonomy.

The creation of the West Pakistan Province set off a tide of indignation in Afghanistan. The Daoud government issued an official protest. Meetings and demonstrations were held in many Afghan cities, denouncing the suppression of the Pashtun national movement by the Pakistani ruling circles.

The imperialists in the West sought to use the worsening of Afghan-Pakistani relations as a means of pressure on Afghanistan, tried to undermine its foreign policy course and bring the country within the sphere of their influence. Pakistan severed political and trade relations with Afghanistan in May 1955; all Afghan consulates and trade missions were closed down and goods in transit across Pakistani territory were stopped. The sharp reduction in foreign trade had a grave effect on the Afghan economy. Amidst the rising tension in its relations with Pakistan, the Afghan government announced a state of emergency and general mobilisation in May 1955.[53] Simultaneously, Kabul supported the mediatory efforts of some Middle East countries to settle the Afghan-Pakistani conflict. Those efforts, however, were resented in the USA, which saw them as a threat to its imperialist plans. The Pakistani government, for its part, dragged out the settlement, demanding that Afghanistan should discontinue its support to the Pashtun movement. The ban on the shipment of goods across Pakistan meant, in fact, an economic blockade of Afghanistan and, in the view of those who had organised it, was to force Afghanistan to make concessions.

At that hour of trial Afghanistan turned for help to the Soviet Union and sent a delegation to Moscow in May 1955. In June that year a Soviet-Afghan treaty was signed on the shipment of goods across the territory of both countries. The economic blockade of Afghanistan was thus breached. The treaty proved important in that it strengthened the international position of Afghanistan and helped it to cope with its economic difficulties.

After they failed in their attempts to exert crude pressure on Afghanistan, the imperialists, who had kindled the Afghan-Pakistani conflict, had to seek ways of settling it. In September 1955, an understanding was reached on normalising relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, after which Afghan consulates and trade missions were reopened in Pakistan and the shipment of foreign trade goods to Afghanistan across Pakistani territory was resumed.[54]

In November 1955, a special parliamentary session was followed by a Loy Jirgah meeting. The participants in the meeting spoke in favour of continued support of the movement of the Pashtuns in Pakistan, of not recognising Pashtunistan as part of Pakistan without the consent of the Pashtuns, and called for a build-up of Afghanistan's defence potential.[55]

The development in the region made even the section of the Afghan ruling classes, who advocated the bourgeois evolution of the country, increasingly aware of the true essence of the neocolonialist policy pursued by Western imperialist states with regard to Afghanistan, a policy which undermined the foundations of its independence. Foreign policy was reappraised and, as a consequence, there was a shift from the orientation on the capitalist West. The national-patriotic forces of Afghan society saw that the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were their sincere friends, and so they looked for assistance from them in improving the national economy and strengthening of Afghanistan's international position.

In December 1955, a Soviet Government delegation arrived in Kabul at the invitation of the Afghan Government. After the talks, both sides declared their intention to expand Soviet-Afghan relations and decided to prolong the term of the 1931 Treaty on Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression. The joint communiqué said the Soviet Union was prepared to grant Afghanistan credit to the value of $100 million on easy terms for economic development. An agreement to that effect was signed in January 1956.

From 1957 onwards the Soviet Union began to assist Afghanistan in geological survey and in training native personnel. Under the agreement on expanding Soviet-Afghan technical and economic cooperation, signed in Moscow in 1959, the Soviet Union helped Afghanistan in the construction of the 680-kilometre highway linking Kushka, Herat and Qandahar. During the same period friendly relations were also being established with other socialist countries: Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR.

Relying on financial aid from the Soviet Union,[56] the Afghan Government drew up the first five-year plan of social and economic development (1956/1957-1960/1961). The plan envisaged the priority development of agriculture, primarily irrigation, and also of power engineering, transport and communications, to be financed by the state. The total sum of state investment earmarked for the first five-year plan was 10.6 billion afghanis.[57]

To make a fuller use of internal resources, a system of revenues from various incomes was devised, and taxes and customs duties were increased. The bulk of the allocations—about 75 per cent—was to come by way of foreign aid and loans.[58]

Soviet technical and economic aid greatly contributed to the achievement of the main objectives of the first five-year plan. At that time it accounted for more than 70 per cent of the entire foreign aid to Afghanistan. With Soviet assistance Afghanistan started the construction of its largest economic projects, which constituted the basis of the developing public sector: the 100,000-kilowatt Naghlu hydroelectric power station; the Jangalak motor repair plant in Kabul; the Jalalabad irrigation system, a motorway across the Hindu Kush, and the Sher Khan river port on the Amu Darya. Some time later an understanding was reached on assistance in prospecting and geological survey for construction.

The main emphasis in the five-year plan was on agriculture, in which 85 per cent of the population were then employed. As many as 2.3 billion afghanis were allocated to agriculture, of this, about 1,060 million to be spent on continuing the construction of the Helmand project.[59] The programme of social development in the countryside was drawn up and the first steps taken to implement it, with considerable emphasis on combating agricultural pests, on irrigation and rural road building, and also on developing primary education. All of these measures suited the ruling circles, which wanted to adapt the existing agrarian relations to the needs of capitalist development. At the same time such a policy did not change the form of landownership. The landowners' total monopoly of land helped preserve the feudal exploitation of the peasants.

The results of the fulfilment of the first five-year plan as regards its main objectives proved to be below the set targets. The average annual growth rate of the gross social product was 1.5 per cent.[60] But the existence of a number of large new enterprises in the public sector of the economy, including some in the infrastructure, created conditions for more rapid progress in the next period.

In the latter half of the 1950s, the number of primary, secondary and vocational schools increased. As it was in the interest of the state developing along bourgeois lines to draw women into public affairs, the obligatory wearing of the yashmak by women was cancelled in 1959—a measure that was backed by broad sections of the Afghan youth and women. This enabled women to do socially useful work. According to Afghan researcher G. D. Panjsheri, the first groups of nurses began working in several outpatient hospitals as early as 1959; several women were employed at the state-owned printing press, and by 1962 about 500 women were working in various sectors of the state apparatus.

Certain changes were taking place in the socio-class structure of Afghan society. The wide scope of money-lending operations in the countryside helped to increase the number of private estates and furthered social differentiation among the peasants.

The economic policy of the Daoud government, which expanded state participation and state control over the major spheres of production, somewhat limited the monopoly of the larger trade *sherkats* of commercial activity, including foreign trade. Therefore it was supported by a considerable section of the bourgeoisie. However, petty-bourgeois circles were, on the whole, opposition-minded, though, in contrast to the period from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, these sentiments did not grow into an opposition movement. Within the framework of state capitalist policy pursued by the Daoud government, the petty bourgeoisie was not given sufficient opportunity to expand its business. In addition, the existing political system restricted its participation in public affairs.

The number of industrial enterprises was growing, as was the number of workers. In the early 1960s, the working class included 15,800 people employed at factory-type enterprises.[61]

However as it was numerically small and unorganised and as the level of its political awareness was still low, it was a long way from occupying a place of its own in public life.

The policy of strengthening central power, backed up by major economic measures, limited the power of separatist-minded tribal khans and elders. But despite resistance, covert and overt, on the part of the khans, who were simultaneously rich landowners, the ruling circles managed to carry out a number of administrative, economic and cultural measures in the area populated by the tribes.

The Muslim clerical elite appeared to be the most conservative social force which, allied with the landed aristocracy, opposed socio-economic change. However the changes taking place in the country could not but influence the positions of that social estate as a whole. There emerged a social stratum which gradually began to call for a renewal of many outworn traditional attitudes in an attempt to adapt Islam to the needs of the time. Seeking to use religion for its own purposes, the government backed loyal members of the Muslim clergy, appointing some of them to key posts in the state apparatus, in education and in courts.

Afghanistan's equitable and mutually beneficial relations with the socialist countries helped it to strengthen its national sovereignty and consolidate its international position, forcing the imperialist powers to manoeuvre and seek new ways and means of implementing their schemes with regard to that country. In 1956, the USA agreed to assist Afghanistan in developing its agriculture, mining industry and education. In 1958, Pakistan granted Afghanistan the right to ship goods across Pakistani territory. In the late 1950s, West German monopolies stepped up their activities by taking part in the construction of power plants and factories in the manufacturing industry.

In 1962, Afghanistan launched the second five-year plan for social and economic development (1962-1967). The main stress was on the development of the basic sectors of the economy: mining, power engineering, transport, and agriculture. Much attention was given to building factories for the light industry. It was also planned to complete the construction of a number of projects in the communications started during the first five-year plan. An important part of the new plan was personnel training. The total sum of capital investment under the new plan was 25 billion afghanis. As before, provision was made for the extensive use of foreign aid (to the sum of 18 billion afghanis).[62] Of the 7 billion afghanis allocated from local sources, only 400 million were invested by the private sector, the rest being invested by the state.[63] Though the second five-year plan was named the "industrialisation plan", much emphasis, as before, was on developing agriculture. Capital investment in agriculture was increased by 240 per cent as compared with the first five-year plan, and amounted to 4.4 billion afghanis,[64] with the main emphasis on the development of those sectors which were to develop the raw material and export base.

As in the period of the first five-year plan, the Soviet Union offered substantial aid to Afghanistan in its efforts to fulfil the second five-year plan. The Soviet-Afghan agreement on technical cooperation, signed in 1961 in Moscow, provided for Soviet assistance in geological survey, prospecting for, and extraction of, oil and gas, the building of chemical plants, road building, the development of agriculture, and personnel training. In 1962, an understanding was reached on assistance in housing construction.

The attitude of Western countries to assisting Afghanistan in the fulfilment of its second five-year plan hinged on the general goals of the imperialist countries in the region. The USA, contrary to its former statements, refused to offer substantial aid and cooperation on the basis of long-term programmes, and agreed merely to participate in the construction of a few projects. A similar stance was taken by some other Western countries. The reduction of Western aid made it harder for Afghanistan to complete its main projects and called into question the practicability of the five-year plan as a whole.

Afghanistan's policy of positive neutrality ran counter to the plans of the imperialist powers and weakened their influence in that part of Asia. In the early 1960s, the Western imperialists resumed their attempts to undermine the country's foreign policy, which did not suit them. The Western press distorted the essence of Soviet-Afghan relations and issued absurd allegations that the USSR was using its aid to Afghanistan for its own political ends in the region. It even alleged that the Soviet Union was attempting to "invade India". But as the flyblown assertions about a "Soviet threat" proved ineffective, Western propaganda set about discrediting Afghanistan's policy of neutralism. Afghan positive neutrality, it was alleged, might isolate the country in the region, which presented a danger to its "traditional classes". This propaganda campaign was accompanied by pressure on Afghanistan.

The main pressure point was still the differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Pashtun issue. By the beginning of 1961 tension had again increased on the Afghan-Pakistani border. Afghan Ambassador to Washington, M. H. Maiwandwal, protested to the US Government against US weapon deliveries to Pakistan. In September 1961, the Pakistani Government again closed Afghan consulates and trade missions on its territory, which resulted in the suspension of Afghan export shipment across Pakistan. This led to the rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In the difficult economic situation caused by the suspension of shipments, the Western imperialists were building up pressure on Afghanistan, insistently reiterating the idea that its conflict with Pakistan could be settled only along the lines of cooperation with the West and the member countries of military-political groupings. In 1962, an Iranian-Afghan agreement on transit deliveries of Afghan goods across Iran was signed.

The economic and social measures being implemented in Afghanistan influenced the evolution of social relations. The "guided economy" policy was designed to restrict archaic social relations and provide broader opportunities for the business activities of the middle and petty bourgeoisie. However, the ruling circles did not carry through any measures designed to meet the interests of the working people. The class character of government policy was most pronounced in agrarian relations. The planned adaptation of existing feudal institutions to the requirements of the developing capitalist sector in agriculture did not contradict the economic and social interests of big landowners. Insignificant measures, such as the increase in state credits, the creation of credit cooperatives, and a rise in the purchasing prices of farm produce, did not change the form of land ownership and social relations in the countryside. Underdeveloped agriculture limited the economic possibility of carrying through the planned measures and hampered the business activity of the petty and middle bourgeoisie. The agonising and perverse character of capitalist evolution had a negative effect on the economic position of the direct agricultural producers, above all the poor peasants.

The numerical growth of the industrial proletariat, that is, of workers employed in modern factories, and its development into an independent class, gave rise to contradictions between labour and capital—a new phenomenon in the sphere of social relations in Afghanistan. The slow rate of industrial growth combined with continuing agrarian overpopulation increased the number of the unemployed. The ruling circles were confronted with the need to solve the problems affecting the working class. Most important among them were the unsettled relations between workers and employers, the civil rights of workers, their role in social production, and the rational distribution of labour resources. However, the National Employment Committee, set up in 1962, confined itself merely to studying these problems.

The state-capitalist measures taken by the government, and its social programme of "supra-class unity" stimulated activity among some of the middle sections of society, as a result of which the social base of the regime became a little broader. A larger expansion of that base was impossible because of the class character of the government's policy which, on the whole, was aimed at defending the interests of the ruling upper crust.

The country's economic and social advancement was slowed down a great deal by the preservation of outdated political institutions, a fact which provoked dissatisfaction among the champions of change. During its rule the Daoud government did not satisfy a single demand concerning the reform of state administration as proposed by the opposition in the early 1950s. All of this left a negative imprint on the political situation in the country.

The class limitations of the regime's domestic policy, combined with its weakness in the sphere of foreign policy, undermined its stability. The Afghan-Pakistani conflict, which had grown acute in the early 1960s, and the worsening of relations with Western imperialist circles, caused concern among the conservatives who, naturally, preferred the traditional ways of political and economic development. They saw the situation as the result of the lack of flexibility in government policies, which had narrowed down Afghanistan's possibility for manoeuvre in its relations with other countries. Oriented on Western support, these forces attacked the foreign policy of the Daoud government. In March 1963, the Daoud government had to resign.

The new cabinet was formed by Muhammad Yusuf, who had been the Minister of Mining and Industry under Daoud. On the whole, the class set-up of state power did not change, but the advent of a new government marked the beginning of political changes in keeping with the growing requirements of the country's economic evolution.

In its economic programme the Yusuf government announced that it would continue the former "guided economy" policy, but would give greater support to private initiative.

In the political area the government intended to introduce certain changes in state administration. It announced, in particular, that a new constitution would be drawn up to extend civil rights, a new election law would be passed, and political parties organised.

Simultaneously efforts were made to normalise Afghan-Pakistani relations. Both countries held talks in the spring of 1963 through the mediation of Iran. As a result, diplomatic relations between them were restored, the consulates were reopened in both countries, and Afghanistan was given the right to ship its goods through Pakistan.

The programme put forward by the new government, and its practical measures were welcomed by the public at large, which began to give increasing support to state-political change. Though a large section of the public adhered to a national-bourgeois position, bourgeois-democratic demands, typical only of a small number of opposition groups in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were gradually expanding in scope. Now they were advanced at the national level. As there was no private press, nor any political organisations at that time, public views were expressed in the semi-official press, which began to carry an increasing number of articles on agricultural problems and the position of the peasants, to criticise the dominance of money-lenders in the countryside, to focus public attention on the continued impoverishment of the peasants and examine the problem of agrarian overpopulation. The debt bondage of the peasants was named as one of the main factors intensifying social contradictions in rural areas.[65]

Public concern was also aroused by the many unsolved social problems faced by the urban population. The industrial proletariat was growing, and so was the number of transport, construction and agricultural workers, and the national press pointed to the need to solve the social problems of these categories of working people, which also warranted public attention. The most important of these problems were, as was noted before, the unsettled relations between hired labour and employers and also the problem of the labour market. After insistent demands that an attempt be made to resolve these problems, the draft of a new labour law was drawn up in 1965, and it was recommended that it be extended to the private sector as well.[66]

At a time when the working people could not advance independent ideological and political programmes, their demands were included in the programmes of the bourgeois-democratic forces, that is, the petty and middle bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. The struggle by the radical members of these forces for the earliest possible democratisation of state-political institutions, in opposition of those who advocated a gradual adaptation of the existing political system to the needs of bourgeois development, largely determined the general direction of Afghanistan's domestic political activity in those years.

With the appearance of more developed forms of social awareness and a higher level of political activity among various sections of society, the domestic political practice of the ruling circles also changed. In the official press there appeared more frequent calls for a democratisation of public life on the principles of the "unity and cooperation" of all classes, with the emphasis often placed on "improving the living conditions of the masses". Popular support for government measures was regarded as an earnest of their successful implementation. Therefore many government declarations had a "social aspect". Official propaganda attached special significance to influencing intellectuals and students who, in the opinion of government circles, were to play the important role of a link between the government and the masses in implementing the policy of change. Knowing that radical views were widespread among students, the ruling circles, in an attempt to enlist their cooperation and also to retain control over all forms of political activity in the country, called upon the public to prevent manifestations of "fanaticism and free-thinking" and "to respect law and order".[67]

In its economic policy the Yusuf government planned to expand the activity of private capital. On the one hand, the authorities made persistent efforts to establish tighter control over large groups of entrepreneurs who sought to satisfy their own narrow, self-seeking interests, and to make more effective use of their capital in order to fulfil the economic development plans. On the other hand, the government wanted to grant benefits to the private sector in order to stimulate its participation in the expansion of industrial construction. Great attention was paid to mixed state and private enterprises in the framework of the "guided mixed economy". Having undertaken to finance the development of key sectors of the economy (power engineering, transport, and mining), the state provided the private sector with the opportunity to invest more in other industries that were less capital-intensive and brought a quick return. At the same time the areas and amounts of private capital investment were taken into account in the overall plans for the country's economic development. The heightened attention given to the development of private enterprise was backed up by the demand to hand over a number of state enterprises to the private sector. However, those measures did not substantially expand participation by private capital in industrial construction. Private capital still preferred more profitable commerce.

Under the programme of socio-economic measures, a new constitution was drafted and discussed by the Council of Ministers late in 1963. In August 1964, after it had been completed and approved by the government, the draft was published; in September that year it was approved at Loy Jirgah sessions and in October, by the king.

The new Basic Law confirmed the preservation of a constitutional monarchy in Afghanistan, with the king having supreme executive, legislative and judicial powers. Members of the royal family were not allowed to occupy posts in parliament, the government and the Supreme Court. Provision was made for the separation of the three powers. The constitution confirmed the principles of national sovereignty and civil rights and liberties: the inviolability of the home and property; freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly; the equality of all citizens before the law; and freedom of residence and movement. An important new provision in the constitution was the declared right to form societies and political parties, with a reservation that their activities and aims should not contradict the Basic Law.

Pashtu and Dari were declared the official languages of Afghanistan, with Pashtu being the national language, which was in keeping with the spirit of the developing national-bourgeois ideology (Pashtun nationalism). Islam of the Khanifite variety was declared the state religion. At the same time the Basic Law limited the influence of the Muslim clergy, specifically in education and legal procedure, which were placed under the direct control of the state.

Changes were introduced in the constitutional provisions regarding parliament. The deputies to its lower house—the National Assembly—were now to be elected by direct vote for a term of four years. Its chairman was to be elected from among the deputies. In the upper house—the Senate—two-thirds of the deputies were appointed by the king and one-third was elected. Its chairman was also appointed by the king. The government was individually and collectively answerable to the National Assembly, whose deputies could demand that the cabinet of ministers report on their work. The lower house could declare a vote of no confidence in the government. However, the king had the right to dissolve parliament, thereby limiting its control over the government.

Thus, the broader functions given to parliament according to the constitution, together with the right to form political organisations, provided more opportunities for politically active sections of the population to participate in state and public affairs.

On the whole, the 1964 constitution, which was largely bourgeois in character, was designed to protect the interests of the ruling classes and reflected the general need to update the state structure. But the ruling circles that were carrying out the constitutional reform could not ignore public demands for democratic changes.

The adoption of the constitution was a significant event in the life of the country. The rights and liberties proclaimed in it, the formal limitation of the prerogatives of the royal family, the extension of parliamentary functions, the freedom to form political organisations, the restriction of the sphere of influence of the orthodox theologians, and other legislative changes served to stimulate the activity of public movements reflecting various political trends, including the general democratic trend. Following the adoption of the new constitution, the campaign by those forces demanding further democratic reforms had a growing influence on the political situation in the country.

The period from the adoption of the constitution to a parliamentary election was declared transitional, and during that period legislative power was in the hands of the government. A new election law, which for the first time gave women the right to vote in elections, came into force in May 1965.

The election campaign revealed the growing interest of people from various social strata in the work of legislative bodies. The nominees got the opportunity to address the electorate, though under the supervision of the authorities. The election was held in August and September 1965. The majority of the 216 deputies[68] elected to the lower house of parliament were supporters of the government programme of reforms. For the first time a small group of representatives of democratic circles, including those of the radical trend, were elected to parliament.

At one of its first sessions, on October 24, 1965, parliament was expected to pass a vote of confidence in the government formed, with royal assent, by Muhammad Yusuf. However, on that day thousands of people, many of them students from Kabul University, gathered at the parliament building (some even managed to get inside) demanding permission to be present at the parliamentary session. The session was adjourned. On the following day, large demonstrations in Kabul ended in clashes with the police. The demonstrators demanded changes in the proposed cabinet and accused a number of ministers of corruption and bribery. The authorities used force against the demonstrators and some of the students were injured. Kabul University and schools were closed for a week.

The Yusuf government was supported by the majority of the deputies and was then approved by the king. On October 26, the head of the new cabinet set forth the government programme, stressing faithfulness to the spirit of the constitution, and called for social measures to improve relations between landowners and peasants, between employers and workers. The government confirmed the policy of developing the "guided mixed economy" on a planned basis. In foreign policy, the principles of non-alignment and positive neutrality remained unchanged.

At the same time the government said nothing about the dramatic events of October 24 and 25, and this was viewed as disregard for public sentiments. Student disturbances in Kabul continued. On October 29, the Yusuf government resigned.

The new cabinet was headed by Muhammad Hashim Maiwandwal, who had been the Minister of Information and the Press in the previous government. According to the members of the new cabinet, its programme could be summed up as encouragement to the population to take part in political affairs. Speaking about his desire to promote progress, the new prime minister stressed that the government intended to give more thought to the conditions of workers and small farmers, and to create the conditions necessary for the free functioning of political parties and the press. The main lines of economic and foreign policy remained almost unchanged.

In its proclamations the Maiwandwal government focused on problems concerning the position of students, though the main aim was to pacify them. However, student protest actions did not abate, often going beyond purely academic demands. In December 1965, demonstrations and meetings were held at Kabul University, and leaflets were distributed. Some of the students involved were arrested.

Meanwhile the newly elected parliament approved, after prolonged debate and in accordance with the constitution, the bill on political parties. This was doubtlessly a major gain for the democratic forces, as it made it possible to organise political action. However, under the law, political parties were placed under government control, which restricted open political and ideological struggle.*

The 1960s saw an acceleration of economic growth in the framework of the second five-year plan (1962-1967). Thanks to Soviet technical aid large industrial enterprises and economic infrastructure projects were either completed or were under construction: the 680-kilometre-long motor highway linking Kushka, Herat and Qandahar (1965); the 470-kilometre highway between Kabul and port Sher Khan, built in difficult conditions across the Hindu Kush range (1966); the Naghlu hydroelectric power station with a capacity of 100,000 kilowatts, the biggest of its kind in Afghanistan (1967); the Jalalabad irrigation system with the Darunta power station (1965), which made it possible to establish four farms in the region in subsequent years; gas fields in the north, and a 365-kilometre gas pipeline between Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia (1968), after which Afghanistan began to export gas to the Soviet Union; and the Kabul Polytechnic (1968), to mention just a few. The number of small artisan enterprises increased considerably. Many of them were fitted out with primitive machines and equipment. The role of private capital, which was encouraged by the government, somewhat increased. The attraction of foreign loans and credits for financing Afghan five-year plans was followed by a rise in foreign capital investments, and this process was further promoted by the 1967 law on private foreign capital investments.

While the economic assistance given to Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries was expanding, the Western states, the USA above all, were cutting back their financial participation in the construction projects for the public sector of the Afghan economy. The general talk by the ruling circles in the imperialist countries about their economic aid to Afghanistan was not followed by practical assistance, which betrayed their unwillingness to facilitate accelerated economic growth in the country. The protracted construction of the irrigation system in the Helmand valley was a case in point, and the prospects for the completion of the project were bleak.

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* The political groups that emerged in the latter half of the 1960s never received legal status, for the bill on political parties was not approved by the king, who feared the legalisation of the opposition centres.

With the fulfilment of the two first five-year plans, the public sector in the economy expanded considerably. State investment in economic development accounted for almost all the total allocations for both five-year plans (90.3 and 98.3 per cent respectively). The structure of the public sector also changed. New industries emerged: motor repair, gas, chemical, cement and house building. The output of state-owned enterprises increased 4.4-fold over the period of the two five-year plans.[69] Industrial construction went hand in hand with the training of national personnel, for the most part industrial workers and technicians. The majority of Afghan skilled workers were trained at major projects built with the technical and economic assistance of the Soviet Union. The number of workers and technicians trained by 1967 totalled 30,000.[70]

The changes in the economy caused by the construction of industrial projects in the public sector, were followed by a growth in the productive forces, which inevitably influenced the social make-up and, consequently, the alignment of major class forces. In the process of the national-bourgeois evolution, those sections of the population whose activity was one way or another linked with the nascent capitalist structures were expanding and gaining in strength. These were the national bourgeoisie, the industrial proletariat, the technical intelligentsia, the officials, a part of the petty bourgeoisie, and the students. In the mid-1960s the first ideological trends emerged, reflecting the interests of those social strata. Later on those trends grew into independent political parties and groups. In a situation in which the population was for the most part illiterate, especially the rural population, which was disunited and psychologically conservative, the political struggle in the towns became particularly tense.

The radical sections of the intelligentsia and students, the most educated and politically conscious part of the population, was in the van of the political movement. At the initial stage of the formation of political parties differing in ideological and political programmes (the mid-1960s), the publications in privately issued newspapers and periodicals were the chief form of political activity. Private newspapers appeared after the new law on the press was approved by parliament in 1965. Most of the publications were critical or debated possible ways of achieving the social, economic and political development of the country. Most of the private newspapers served as the ideological and organisational nuclei of future political parties.

As more and more political groups emerged, the ruling circles presented their own programme as a universal means of satisfying the interests of the entire population. Such a policy, it was stressed, would be based on drawing various social groups, united in a "front of progressive forces", into the common effort to ensure social progress and democracy.[71] These views gave rise to the idea of forming a political party which, guided by the interests of the ruling classes and supported by the government, would control social and political activity and have a monopoly of influence over public opinion. Prime Minister Maiwandwal tried to create such a party.

In a speech delivered on Independence Day in August 1966 the Prime Minister set forth the main provisions of his party's programme, which were designed to implement "progressive and democratic ideals". Therefore the party was named the Progressive Democratic Party. The aims and the tactics of the progressive democratic movement were described in detail in its newspaper *Mossawat* (Equality), first published in January 1967. The chief aim of the party, the paper wrote, was to "open up the way to economic reforms (on the basis of the "guided economy") and to positive reforms in social, cultural and intellectual life". The current task of the party was "the struggle in the name of the principles of Islam, constitutional monarchy, nationalism, democracy, and socialism", "for economic, political and social democracy; for the rights of the dispossessed and oppressed classes; against poor living conditions, social injustice and the remains of feudalism".[72]

In advancing this reformist programme, the Progressive Democrats declared that it should be carried out through a "silent", or "lawful" revolution, with the laws and the constitution strictly observed. Elaborating on this thought, the paper wrote: "By supporting the ideas of progressive democracy, it is possible, in a peaceful and lawful way and in accordance with historical reality, to break the chains of oppression and build an edifice of freedom and genuine equality".[73] As for practical ways of eliminating social injustice, the party's ideologists proposed that new labour legislation be worked out to grant the workers the right to participate in administering enterprises and receiving a part of their profit.[74] Concerning the exploiter classes, the publishers of the newspaper recommended admonition and exhortation. Explanatory work must be conducted among them, the paper wrote, for "they make mistakes, and we sympathise with them, explain their mistakes to them in a peaceful, brotherly way, so that they could reform".[75]

The *Mossawat* paid special attention to the desperate plight of the poor peasants. In its publications on this issue, it adhered to the position of social criticism. Here is what it wrote in an article entitled "Our Peasants": "The position of our peasants is the worst manifestation of the epoch of feudalism in our age. Hardships and misery are the peasant's eternal lot. He works, creates values, but the fruit of his labour is misappropriated by his masters. He has nothing!"[76] Acting as champions of social justice, the Progressive Democrats proposed that an agrarian reform be carried out, which would not, however, change social relations in the countryside or the forms of landownership, but introduce a few superficial measures to somewhat improve the economic conditions of the peasants. The reform envisaged an insignificant limitation on landownership, a revision of the terms of land lease, the distribution to peasants of state-owned and newly-reclaimed land, the setting up of state farms and peasant marketing and consumer cooperatives, and aid to farmers by providing them with seeds, farm implements and fertilisers. The refusal to abolish feudal landownership—the basis of social inequality in the countryside—doubtlessly detracted from the effectiveness of the proposed measures.

The programme of the Progressive Democratic Party lacked a clear-cut ideological platform. Having joined together incompatible principles (as, for instance, monarchy and socialism), the party failed to become the political spokesman of any one section of society or class and remained a small group of people supporting the ideas of Muhammad Hashim Maiwandwal. Furthermore, Maiwandwal's programme* and his far-reaching promises, which did not, however, provide for radical measures, found no broad support among the public due to the mounting struggle to ensure the implementation of the main provisions of the constitution. In 1967, the Maiwandwal government resigned. In the years that followed his party did not win any significant influence and was preoccupied more with an in-depth analysis of the sophisticated details of its conception than with practical activity. Its newspaper *Mossawat*, however, proved viable and existed till the end of 1971.

The situation in Afghanistan in the mid-1960s was increasingly influenced by major international factors. The strengthening of the socialist world system, the powerful growth of the national liberation movement, the collapse of the colonial system and the emergence of new independent states brought about substantial changes in the world. Left-wing radical elements, who reflected both the national and the social aspirations of the people, gained ground within the national liberation movement. The spontaneous pro-socialist drive of the working people, who were fighting for a better life, created favourable conditions for the dissemination of the ideas of scientific socialism. These ideas were spreading throughout the developing countries.

As the Afghan working class was small and politically immature, the ideas of scientific socialism were propounded by members of the left-radical, progressive section of the petty bourgeoisie, in particular the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. In 1965, separate Marxist circles and socialist groups of democratic intellectuals united together in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Its First (founding) Congress was held illegally on January 1, 1965 in Kabul. The Congress elected the party's Central Committee which consisted of seven members: Nur Muhammad Taraki (who was elected its General Secretary), Babrak Karmal, S. A. Keshtmand, and others. In April 1966, the PDPA founded the newspaper *Khalq* (The People) and published its programme in its first two issues.

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* The programme of meetings between Maiwandwal and his cabinet members and the population, and trips to the provinces to explain government policy.

The programme contained an analysis of the international and domestic situation and stressed that the main cause of "the slow-down in the development of the productive forces and the disastrous economic position of the people was the economic and political domination of the feudal class, the wealthy local and compradore merchants, the bureaucrats and agents of international monopolies whose class interests ran counter to the interests of the popular masses in Afghanistan".[77] The PDPA, the programme said, undertook to solve these problems by forming a national-democratic government supported by "the united national front of all progressive, democratic and patriotic forces, i.e., workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, handicraftsmen, and the petty and national bourgeoisie, fighting for national independence, the democratisation of public life and the victorious conclusion of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle". At the stage of national-democratic development, the paper said, the feudal system should be smashed and the country should move over to the path of non-capitalist development.

Describing the political goals of a national-democratic government, the PDPA programme envisaged establishment of genuine democracy, achievement of economic independence and national sovereignty, democratisation of the legal system and provision of political rights: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom to form political organisations and trade unions, and freedom to strike and organise demonstrations. It also promised to seek a democratic solution to the nationalities question.

The economic policy of a national-democratic government, the paper stressed, should be directed at the planned development of the public sector. "The public sector," wrote *Khalq*, "which is anti-feudal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist, will form the basis for the development of the economy and true democracy".[78] This policy also provided for the accelerated industrialisation of Aghanistan.

The agrarian policy, the programme said, should be aimed at liquidating feudalism through the implementation of a democratic land reform in the interest of landless and land-hungry peasants and with their direct participation, through the cancellation of debts to money-lenders, and the creation of peasant cooperatives, with the state giving them every possible assistance.

The PDPA programme provided for the accomplishment of a number of major social tasks, including introduction of a 42-hour working week, paid leave, a reduced working day for arduous or hazardous jobs, old-age pensions and free medical service, prohibition of child labour, creation of trade unions, conclusion of collective labour agreements, construction of cheap housing for all the dispossessed, extension of women's rights, measures to combat arbitrary rule and lawlessness, and also a large number of cultural measures, above all to combat illiteracy.

In the foreign policy sphere, the PDPA adhered to a peaceful policy of positive neutrality, and supported the struggle for peace and peaceful coexistence and the national liberation movement, and fought against colonialism and neocolonialism.

At the end of its programme, the Party briefly outlined its tactics and strategy: "Coming out in support of the constitution and fighting, openly and peacefully at this stage, for the formation of a national-democratic government and a non-capitalist path of development on the basis of an advanced ideology and world outlook, we never forget our responsibility to the people, to the working people of Afghanistan, or our ultimate goal—the building of a new, socialist society."[79]

This democratic programme expressed the ideological platform of the PDPA. In the subsequent issues *Khalq* set forth the class essence of the Party and the goals of the newspaper itself, which were "to rally all the progressive, patriotic and democratic forces into one national-democratic organisation which would defend the interests of the people, and to form the nucleus of the organisation's ideological unity".[80] Describing the class nature of the Party, the paper wrote that this "new type of political organisation in Afghanistan will consist of the vanguard of the working class and, acting as a guiding force in the democratic movement, will work together with the peasants and progressive intellectuals. This force has set itself the goal of uniting the people in the struggle against despotism and reaction, and showing the working people how to build a free and democratic society, of awakening the nation, broadening the movement against feudalism and imperialism, establishing a constitutional-democratic system, and liquidating the absolutist forces and obsolete relations of production."[81]

The publications carried in *Khalq* initiated the vigorous dissemination of the ideas of scientific socialism among various sections of the intelligentsia and the working people. At the same time, they became the object of fierce attacks by the rightist circles. Some press organs, including semi-official ones, hit out at the *Khalq*. Some of the private newspapers strove to discredit the basic provisions of the democratic programme published in *Khalq*, contrasting them against the idea of the unity of all classes and asserting that "the class struggle is a drag on progress and revival".[82]

The authorities did not confine themselves to attacks on *Khalq* in the press but also charged the newspaper with violating the constitution. In May 1966, the government banned the newspaper. Only six issues of *Khalq* had come out.

Among the other papers demanding the implementation of constitutional provisions was *Peyame Emruz* (Today's News), which began publication in February 1966. The paper pointed to the main social evils and shortcomings, resolutely defending the right of the people to take part in political and public affairs. In May 1966, it was also banned, though its publication was resumed six months later.

The newspaper *Seda-i Awam* (The Voice of the Masses), which adopted the position of petty-bourgeois radicalism, was close to *Khalq* in spirit and in the subject-matter of its publications. Its first issue came off the press in March 1968. The paper was greatly influenced by *Khalq*'s ideas, as could be seen even in its political terminology.

Describing their aims, the publishers of *Seda-i-Awam* wrote in their first editorial that the newspaper served the interests of the working people, was searching for "new ways of liberating them from poverty and injustice and struggling to ensure their social well-being". They grouped all the social strata and classes in two opposing camps. One of them, the camp of poverty and oppression, included "progressive intellectuals, intellectual workers, teachers, the progressive youth, office employees in the middle bracket, manual workers, land-hungry and landless peasants, small landowners, nomads, handicraftsmen, small employers", i.e., all the working people, who accounted for 98 per cent of the population. The second camp, the one of oppression and exploitation, included "large landowners, capitalists and a handful of ruling oppressors".[83] Examining the position of the working people, the paper stressed that they were deprived not only of economic benefits, but even of social and political rights. Proclaiming a struggle for the "provision of rights and the emancipation of all working masses", the ideologists of *Seda-i Awam* put forward a programme for that struggle which envisaged the formation of a national-democratic government by "handing political and economic power to the people, in accordance with the will of the people" and by effecting a series of socio-economic reforms for the benefit of the working people and along non-capitalist lines. The public sector, it said, would be enlarged and strengthened, more effective economic planning would be introduced, agriculture would be mechanised, and the public health system expanded.[84] The forms of struggle to attain these goals were not specified, though it was supposed that it would be legal activity based on the unity and solidarity of the working people.

For all their positive content, the *Seda-i Awam* slogans did not go beyond general declarations.[85] The paper did not mention the ways and means of implementing the proposed reforms in the socio-political structure of the state.[86] Incidentally, one of the slogans proclaimed by the paper—"Food, Clothing and Housing"—was subsequently widely used and became central to the programme of socio-economic change carried out by the PDPA.

In the late 1960s, there emerged a trend whose ideologists were petty-bourgeois extremists. The ideas propounded by the leaders of this group, whose members called themselves "new democrats", enjoyed support among a part of the petty bourgeoisie, some toiling intellectuals and semi-proletarians, all of whom were most susceptible to extreme radicalism. In 1968, they began to publish the newspaper *Shula-yi Jawed* ("The Eternal Flame") mirroring the basic theoretical conceptions of Afghan leftist extremists. The ideologists of the group, ignoring the class struggle in the capitalist countries and belittling the significance of contradictions between the socialist world system and imperialism, regarded the national liberation movement in the developing countries as the vanguard of the world revolutionary process.[87] Their theories were clearly borrowed from Maoist ideology. The publishers of *Shula-yi Jawed* minimised the role of the working class[88] and called the peasantry the leading class capable of rallying round itself other democratic and semi-democratic social strata.[89]

In a bid to discredit the PDPA programme and split the democratic movement, the Afghan Maoists directed their attack against its main principles. They rejected the PDPA's idea of transition to non-capitalist development, accusing the Party of conciliation with the bourgeoisie and of attempts to lead the oppressed people away from the class struggle. The ideologists of *Shula-yi Jawed* held that a national front of the progressive and democratic forces could not be established so long as the exploiter classes exercised political domination. They were likewise opposed to the principles of peaceful coexistence.[90]

The newspaper hit out at the public sector which, it alleged, only helped to bolster the economic position of the bourgeoisie and was a means of exploiting the working people.[91] On the whole, the ideological concepts of the Afghan Maoists were designed to smear the ideas of scientific socialism and hamstring the democratic movement in the country. The "new democrats", who were headed by Dr. Hadi Mahmudi and engineer Muhammad Osman, had the greatest influence among Kabul students and schoolchildren. The Afghan Maoists conducted also extensive propaganda work among the national minorities, particularly in Herat and Hazarajat. Having no representatives in parliament and guided by the Maoist slogan "The rifle brings power", the Afghan leftist extremists brought to the political struggle an element of disorder, anarchy and unjustified conflict with the authorities. Thus, in May 1968, members of the *Shula-yi Jawed* group provoked a clash between participants in a meeting and the police. As a result, the Maoist leaders were arrested and sent to prison and their newspaper was closed down.

A noteworthy phenomenon in the political life of the country in the latter half of the 1960s was the publication of the private newspaper *Afghan Mellat* (Afghan Nation), which united the proponents of bourgeois nationalist ideas, who proclaimed themselves social-democrats. Their leader and chief ideologist was Ghulam Muhammad Farhad, publisher of the newspaper, president of the energy department, and later the mayor of Kabul. His political views were influenced to some extent by his years of study in nazi Germany, and he had borrowed many of his ideas from national-socialism. The newspaper's recurrent theme was the creation of a "common spirit of the nation"—a panacea for all social ills. It insisted on the idea of "uniting all the peoples, races and tribes of Afghanistan into one nation, and the traditions and social and legal factors which made up their material and cultural life into one culture". The publishers of the paper saw this idea as a means of "attaining the common goal determined by the common wishes of the nation, the common spirit and common concepts".[92] But they saw the idea of a single nation through the prism of the national interests of the ethnic majority—the Pashtuns, to the detriment of the national minorities. The Pashtun nationalism of *Afghan Mellat* was nourished by the ideas of the "Afghan spirit" which was allegedly inherent in the nation and determined its route towards social and political advancement. Exploiting democratism, the paper appealed to the workers and peasants, suggesting to them the best way of freeing themselves from "poverty, unemployment and injustice". "There is only one way," it declared, "which is unity: the unity of place, the unity of colour, and the unity of thought under the protection of the nation and for the benefit of the nation. And until nationalism becomes rooted among the various classes, your destiny, workers, will remain unchanged."[93] Ignoring, in effect, the class nature of society, the so-called social-democrats produced no positive economic programme and confined themselves merely to general declarations.

The private newspaper *Wahdat* (Unity) adhered to the similar ideological position. Expressing its concern over the socio-economic disorder in society, it called for the unity of all classes, for "class harmony" in the struggle for social justice (by social justice it implied a situation in which the interests of both the propertied classes and the working people would be satisfied). The way to this kind of justice, the paper declared, was the improvement of the existing socio-political system within the framework of the law. The *Wahdat* publishers denounced class struggle in any form. Class struggle, they maintained, could only lead to disturbances and the disruption of public order.[94]

The process of ideological and political polarisation also involved the Muslim theologians. The conservative clergy, who defended the obsolete socio-economic order in the latter half of the 1960s, felt that their influence was waning in various spheres of government and political activity. By the end of the 1960s, the Muslim clergy, whose number ranged between 220,000 and 230,000,[95] were a heterogeneous estate in terms of property status and political views. Some of them (mostly people from the middle urban strata who had received a modern theological education abroad or at home) began to preach the idea of renovating Islam, of modernising it and adapting it to the political views of their time. Their political views were influenced by various bourgeois theories and also by socialist ideas, which had become comparatively widespread in Afghanistan, especially after the emergence of the PDPA. The Islamic modernists had assimilated some of these views. Having found in early Islam ideas consonant with some socialist categories (as, for instance, equality and justice), they tried to prove that the teaching of Muhammad and socialism were compatible and called their conception "Islamic socialism". Censuring greed, avarice and the use of wealth by the powers that be for their own selfish ends, the supporters of "Islamic socialim" sought the means of achieving social justice in self-perfection and in pursuing the path of Islam. Their number though was small.

The conservative section of the Afghan Muslim clergy, represented by outstanding doctors of Muslim law, heads of religious sects and orders, and the imams of large mosques economically linked with feudal landownership and big trade capital, continued to oppose any reforms that could undermine traditional principles.

Criticising capitalism and its vices, and rejecting socialism, the right-wing clergy proposed a path of special, Islamic social development, and styled themselves the defenders of "religious, social, political and national freedom". They published their material in the private newspaper *Gahiz* (Morning), which first appeared in January 1969. Denouncing the vices of Western bourgeois civilisation, mostly its outward manifestations (night clubs, alcoholic drinks, pornography, etc.), the publishers of the newspaper also opposed the ideas of scientific socialism.[96] They were particularly outraged at socialism's denial of private ownership of the means of production, which, in their view, made the socialist system unacceptable for Muslim countries.[97-98] Rejecting socialism and socialist ideas, the *Gahiz* publishers were opposed to any form of class struggle which, they alleged, was brought about by the "infidels" and led to "pessimism, discord, wrath and hatred". The slogans and ideas proclaimed by the paper showed that the forces that grouped round *Gahiz* were in the extreme right wing of the political struggle, diametrically opposed to all the left-wing and democratic trends. The ideological principles of the paper* made up the main part of the programme of the extreme right political groups—the Muslim Brothers and the Muslim Youth.

The ideological struggle over the choice of possible courses of national development involved ever larger sections of the population, particularly the nascent working class, with the PDPA acting as its vanguard. The formation of a working-class party in Afghanistan proceeded in difficult conditions. The classes had not yet taken their final shape in the framework of the multi-structural economy. The working class was numerically small, territorially disunited and politically immature. It had not yet reached that level of organisation which would enable it to act as an independent political force. The peasantry was totally illiterate and was under the strong influence of the so-called traditional leaders—the Muslim clergy, khans and tribal elders. In these conditions the newly emergent PDPA had to conduct its work mainly among the democratic part of the intelligentsia and the students—a politically active but socially heterogeneous section of the population, a large part of which was influenced by petty-bourgeois radicalism and nationalistic prejudices. Moreover, it had no legal status and could not use the various usual forms and methods of political struggle. Nor did it have broad international ties. The PDPA came under attacks from the reactionaries and the right and leftist extremists and was subjected to repression by the authorities. Its composition, which was not uniform, also affected its activities. The majority of its members were intellectuals, mostly teachers, students, minor officials and junior officers. Due to all these objective and subjective factors, the Party went through growing pains at the initial stage of its formation.

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* Between 1965 and 1973, 26 private newspapers and magazines were published in the country.

The differences within the Party, mostly over tactical issues, disrupted its organisational unity in 1966, and in 1967 the PDPA found itself split into two factions. One of them was headed by Babrak Karmal, whose supporters were in favour of a wider use of legal means of struggle (later this faction assumed the name of the Party newspaper *Parcham* [The Flag], which first appeared in 1968). The other faction was headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki, and took the name Khalq. Both factions had one and the same programme and rules and pursued the same goals. In the Party Rules, published illegally in 1967, the PDPA declared itself "the vanguard of the working class and all working people" and said that its activities were based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Parcham took over from *Khalq* the subject-matter and ideological thrust of its publications. It specified and developed the main provisions of the PDPA programme, set the current tasks and formulated the ultimate goal of the struggle. A revolution in Afghanistan, said the *Parcham* leaders, should go through two stages: the national-democratic stage and the stage of socialist transformations. During the first stage a national-democratic government would be formed to represent the progressive and patriotic forces united in a national front: workers, peasants, intellectuals, and the petty and national bourgeoisie. The movement should be led by the proletariat, the most revolutionary class, allied with the peasantry. The main task at the stage of the national-democratic revolution would be the struggle against feudalism along the lines of non-capitalist development. In the course of that struggle, the stage would be set for socialist changes.[99]

The paper devoted much attention to an analysis of the class structure of the population and the economic conditions of the working people. It informed its readers about political actions by the working masses. *Parcham* was published until April 1970, when it was closed down by the authorities in response to demands by reactionary mullahs after the publication in the paper of a considerable volume of material to mark the centenary of Lenin's birth.

The revival of political activity, which was assuming more diverse forms, reflected growing tension in the sphere of social relations. Though the economic potential of the country had grown somewhat over the period of the two five-year plans, the conditions of the main categories of workers had not been improved. In 1967, the third five-year plan of socio-economic development (1967-1972) was drawn up. As distinct from the previous two plans, in which the main emphasis had been on the infrastructure, the bulk of capital investment under the third five-year plan went to industry and farming. More than 70 per cent of the investment required was covered by foreign aid.[100] All in all, 33 billion afghanis were earmarked for development under the third five-year plan, of which 32.4 per cent was earmarked for industry, 29.4 per cent for agriculture, 16.7 per cent for education and medical care, and 12.4 per cent for transport and communications.[101] As before, the main portion of the investment (31 billion afghanis) came from the public sector.[102]

The elaboration of the third five-year plan raised the problem of financing industry and agriculture—the main aspect of the government's economic policy. As the number of large and medium-scale industrial enterprises in Afghanistan was small and their returns were low, taxation became the main source of state revenue. The taxation system had not undergone any serious change for decades. As a result, in the early 1960s the land-tax accounted for a mere 2 per cent of the budget revenues. The government attempted to revise the tax system, to introduce progressive taxation and to increase taxation on large landowners and livestock breeders. Its proposals to this effect sparked off heated debate at the parliament session of the 12th convocation. The parliamentary majority, which was made up of large landowners and mullahs (the latter constituted 20 per cent of the deputies in the lower house[103], i.e., the social groups associated with large landed estates and the pre-capitalist mode of production, rejected the bills on taxation proposed by the government and other measures to increase state revenue, seeing in them an encroachment on their class interests.

Consistent socio-economic transformations to suit the interests of the working people were demanded in parliament by the deputies of the PDPA faction headed by Babrak Karmal, and by other groups. They insisted on a radical agrarian reform which would change the form of landownership.

The parliamentary centre, speaking for the national bourgeoisie, proved unable clearly to define its position and to resist the conservative majority, and this revealed the weakness of the bourgeois elements in the political structure of the state. In the end, all attempts by the government to get parliament approve its major bills, which could have secured a more successful fulfilment of the five-year plan, were blocked by the right-wing deputies. This was equally true of the discussion on the draft of the third five-year plan.

As the five-year period progressed, it became clear that the amount of foreign financial aid was a good deal less than expected (about 80 per cent in the first two years and 51 per cent in the third year).[104] The government was thus compelled to revise the draft as a whole and to offer a new draft for parliament's consideration. In the end, the draft of the third-five year plan was not fully approved by parliament. The friction between parliament and the government extended over a wide range of problems. The conservatism of the majority of the deputies acted as a brake on any, even fairly moderate, changes within the framework of "regulated" economic and social evolution. The Maiwandwal government, which was trying to use the Progressive Democratic Party it had formed to win parliamentary support for its social measures, came under fierce criticism and in the autumn of 1967 it had to resign.

The next government, headed by Nur Ahmad Etemadi, failed to introduce any substantial changes in the relations between the legislative and executive organs of power. The tension between them, often taking the form of latent conflict, made itself felt for a number of years. By 1969 the Etemadi government, continuing the efforts of its predecessors to find new sources of revenue, elaborated a programme of measures by regulating and increasing taxation on cattle and land, raising the prices of petrol, increasing road tolls, etc. These measures were expected to bring in a further 362 million afghanis.[105] However, this programme was also blocked by parliament. The government resorted to floating a large internal loan, which only served to increase inflation. On the whole, as a result of the shortage of domestic revenue and the reduction of foreign financial aid, the actual fulfilment of the third five-year plan in terms of capital investment amounted to 20.8 billion afghanis as against the 33 billion afghanis,[106] initially planned. The rate of economic growth during the third five-year plan was less than 3 per cent, which was slower than in the preceding period. The country's foreign debt was growing rapidly to reach $600 million by 1973.[107]

In 1971, with the general deterioration of the economic situation, (rapidly increasing prices, declining industrial output, the increasing numbers of small entrepreneurs and handicraftsmen ruined, unemployment rising steeply), and the intensification of the political struggle, the Etemadi government resigned, to be succeeded by the cabinet of Abdul Zahir.

The democratic forces, represented in parliament by only a few deputies, had little opportunity to influence the decisions taken by the legislature. Therefore, using parliament as a legal means of struggle against the ruling circles in defence of the working people's interests, they simultaneously stepped up their activities, legal and illegal, outside parliament.

The democratic forces were led by the PDPA, represented by the two groups, Khalq and Parcham, the most consistent defenders of the working people's interests.

The nationalistic group Setem-i Melli (Against National Oppression), formed in 1968 by Taher Badakhshi, who had left the PDPA, adopted the slogan "Emancipate the national minorities". However, this only added to national strife, and thus acted in the interest of the propertied classes in regions populated by national minorities.

The various sections of the amorphous Afghan bourgeoisie also had their political groups. One such group was Karwan (Caravan), whose news were represented in a liberal bourgeois newspaper issued under the same name. They had close links with national big business and had ample financial resources. They advocated reforms within the framework of national-bourgeois development. Another such group was called Ittihad-i Melli (National Unity), which brought together the champions of limited reforms that preserved traditional Islamic norms in social life. The group of Progressive Democrats also continued to function. It was oriented on bourgeois reforms in the spirit of "Islamic socialism". Another rather active group was the Afghan Mellat, adherents of Pashtun nationalism propagating the ideas of a "national revival of great Afghanistan".

In the late 1960s, the Muslim Brothers organisation emerged on the extreme right wing of the political struggle. It was the spokesman of the most reactionary part of the large landowners and the Muslim clerical elite, the circles which had economic ties with the compradore section of the big bourgeoisie. This organisation, and also the Muslim Youth, an offshoot of the Muslim Brothers, whose members were fanatical students and schoolchildren, proclaimed a battle to the end against left-wing forces.

The 1960s ended with a powerful upsurge of the class struggle, the first indication and the focal point of a general national crisis. The struggle involved practically all sections of the working population, and in 1968 the largest demonstrations extended to the whole country. The main participant was the young working class, which was emerging onto the scene of struggle as a significant component of the country's social structure. According to the democratic press, there were 880,000 hired workers in the country in 1968, including 32,000 industrial proletarians employed at modern factories.[108]

The economic conditions of the working class had seriously deteriorated by the end of the 1960s. With the completion of large projects in the infrastructure, on which the bulk of building workers had been employed, the majority of the workers lost their jobs. The wage level of the workers was far below their real family expenditure. According to *Parcham*, between 1962 and 1967 workers' wages increased by 47 per cent, while food prices more than doubled over the same period.[109] The press reported on the arduous conditions of work, severe exploitation, the violation of workers' trade-union rights and poor living conditions. The conditions of other categories of working people—handicraftsmen, shop-keepers, farm labourers, and day-labourers—were no better. This accounted for the active participation of the broad masses of the city poor, with the working class at their head, in the class battles—in demonstrations, strikes, meetings and protest marches.

The students of the Kabul school of mechanics were the first to go on strike in April 1968. Then the workers of the Jangalak motor repair plant in Kabul called a strike. That year a large May Day demonstration was held in the capital, the first in the country's history. The people who gathered at the meetings that day demanded that May Day should be made a national holiday and called for a campaign to establish labour unions. In May, a wave of workers' demonstrations swept the country: meetings and demonstrations held by workers at Gulbahar, who were joined by peasants and secondary school pupils; a march by oilmen in Shibirghan and workers at cement and textile factories in Pol-e Khomri, and strikes by the workers at the Jangalak plant and the workers at the state-run printing house in Kabul. Most of the workers' demonstrations, which continued all through 1968, were spontaneous, without adequate political leadership. The PDPA and other left-wing organisations, which did not yet enjoy broad political influence among the workers, could not lead the strike actions at the initial stage, though many PDPA members took an active part in the strikes and demonstrations, acquiring their first experience of the class struggle. Altogether the demonstrations involved industrial workers, clerical staff and minor officials, students, schoolchildren, peasants, small traders, and the soldiers of the Labour Corps. From April till August in 1968, about 30,000 people took part in more than 40 strikes.[110]

The strikes were staged at both private and state enterprises, with the most active strike campaign being conducted by workers at the larger industrial enterprises: the Jangalak motor repair plant, the Spinzar textile company in Qunduz, the textile mills of the Nasaji Company, the textile combine in Gulbahar, the gas fields in Shibirghan, and the Kabul integrated house-building factory. The industrial workers were supported by building workers. On June 9, 1968, a large demonstration was held by workers building the road between Pol-e Khomri and Shibirghan. In the summer the unemployed marched in a demonstration in Herat, and in October seasonal workers went on strike in Qandahar. Class actions by the working people assumed nationwide proportions.

At this stage in the strike movement economic demands prevailed. The workers demanded higher wages, paid leave, better working conditions, medical services, social security, and the right to form trade unions. The local and central authorities responded with repression: many of those taking part in the strikes and demonstrations were sacked or arrested. But in some instances the strikes were successful and the management of enterprises and the local authorities were compelled to meet the strikers' demands. On the whole, the strike movement in 1968 demonstrated the growing political maturity of the workers and the ability of the working class to become the vanguard of the democratic movement, turning it into a class movement. However, without political leadership this movement remained spontaneuos, disunited and disorganised, which doomed a large number of the demonstrations to failure.

In 1969, the political struggle was joined by students from Kabul University and the Polytechnic, which was opened in 1968. Student action started back in mid-1968. The students were protesting against the meagre sums allocated by the government for public education, and against its discrimination against workers during enrolment at educational establishments. Many school leavers and university graduates could not find jobs. Elementary schools were attended by only 14.5 per cent of school-age children, secondary schools by 4.6 per cent, and lycées by 2.8 per cent.[111] The schools were understaffed. The education system was obsolete. The pupils at secondary schools and lycées went out into the streets demanding more attention to the needs of education. In the autumn of 1968, demonstrations were held by students in Kabul protesting against the way the higher education system was run, concentrating their criticism on the 1968 law prohibiting students from taking part in political activities. The students also demanded the extension of the civil rights and liberties proclaimed in the 1964 constitution. In their protest actions they were often joined by teachers.

The student actions were largely spontaneous and often ended in clashes with the police who on many occasions burst into the university campus to make arrests. The involvement of the students in the political struggle in 1968-1969 showed they had become a radical political force capable of independent action.

In 1971-1972, at the second stage of the student movement, their actions became more purposeful and acquired a class character. In August 1971, the Kabul University Student League was formed and adopted its statute. The League declared it would fight for "the provision and protection of the professional, democratic, personal and social rights of students", "in support of the liberation movement, for a just peace and intolerance of reactionary activity", that they would "struggle against exploitation and colonialism", and "resist any oppression, violence and discrimination".[112] Thus student action became organised. The League elected a Supreme Council, in which the majority was held by members of the Maoist grouping Shula-yi Jawed. The Supreme Council was the leading, regulating and coordinating centre of the student movement. In accord with a Supreme Council decision taken on November 13, 1971, the students of Kabul University called a large strike, which was later joined by students of diverse political leanings.

The Supreme Council, however, failed to elaborate a common programme of action and therefore could not lead the student movement. Separate student groups acted in support of various political groups. The greatest influence among Kabul University students in the early 1970s was exercised by Khalq, Parcham, Shula-yi Jawed and the Muslim Youth. During the November strike by Polytechnic students, a Union of Teachers was set up with Khalq members winning the majority. The student movement, oppositional by character, was becoming increasingly heterogeneous in terms of class affiliation. The process of political delimitation among the students had reached such a degree that supporters of various political groups engaged in a sharp ideological struggle. Students and representatives of other social groups often acted together on the basis of the slogans of one or other groups.* In this way the political activity by students and schoolchildren merged with demonstrations by the working people to create a single national campaign by the broad masses of the population against the policy of the ruling circles. That campaign was becoming part and parcel of the political struggle in Afghanistan at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. It was a sign of the oncoming crisis in the political system which was less and less suited to the socio-economic development level of the country.

The democratic movement had gained momentum by the late 1960s and was joined by working people on a large scale; the PDPA was conducting an active political struggle and becoming the vanguard of the working people; the ideas of scientific socialism were becoming increasingly widespread. All of this added to the intensity of the class struggle. The right-wing extremists, with the Muslim Brothers as their political vanguard, became an increasingly important factor. In May 1970, they organised meetings and marches in Kabul. They issued leaflets demanding that the spread of communist ideas be prevented and that women be forbidden to work in state establishments. Some of the leaflets called for a "holy war" against all progressives.

The democratic forces, the PDPA above all, were the object of the fiercest attacks. Right-wing activity, which threatened to cause violence and disorder in Kabul, forced the government to use severe measures against them. Some of the fanatics were arrested, others were deported from the city.

The actions organised by right-wing religious forces spilled over to other towns. They were most acute in Jalalabad. Here the organisers were joined by some elders of the Shinwari tribe, small traders, handicraftsmen and artisans. The demonstrations, followed by violence, involved about 5,000 people. The protesters destroyed the Spinghar Hotel, the largest in the city, and troops were called in to quell them.

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* In 1968-1972, the PDPA led more than a thousand demonstrations by factory workers and intellectuals.

These events were exploited by the top Muslim clergy to pressurise the government into renouncing its liberalisation plans and taking strong action against the democratic forces. One of the major aims of the rightists was to worsen Soviet-Afghan relations. Anti-government demonstrations by the right-wing clergy also took place in 1971, in response to the country's first May Day demonstrations organised by the PDPA and other democratic forces.

In 1971-1972, another wave of strike action swept Afghanistan, again involving mainly the workers at the largest industrial enterprises. As in 1968, the class demonstrations of the early 1970s were characterised by their broad social composition. Now the struggle was often joined by peasants and handicraftsmen, though industrial workers and Kabul students were in the van, as before. These demonstrations were more organised and were headed by the leaders of democratic political groups. The political leadership of the strike movement ensured a fairly high level of consciousness among the strikers and ensured the prevalence of political demands related to the struggle against tyranny, exploitation, and neocolonialism, and to the campaign for democratic rights and freedoms, and for the unity of the working people. The strike movement was intensifying and often could not be controlled by the authorities.

Political instability in the country increased as the economic situation deteriorated following two successive severe draughts (in 1970/71 and 1971/72), which caused loss of crops and livestock. The food shortage that ensued could not be compensated for by domestic resources, since by the late 1960s the deficit of marketable grain in the country has reached 200,000 tons and was covered by grain deliveries from the USA, the USSR and Pakistan.[113] The government had to ask other countries for aid.

However, food imports were insufficient to eliminate the acute shortage of foodstuffs. Some of the remote regions were hit by famine. Food prices soared; and large-scale commerce profiteered. Many members of the ruling circles also benefited from the hardships of the people. The food coming from abroad was often misappropriated, particularly during distribution. In March 1972, protest demonstrations against high prices were staged in many provinces. By the early 1970s the food crisis had exposed many social vices. Embezzlement, bribery, corruption, and smuggling were rampant. Over one million head of livestock were smuggled into Iran annually, and illegal trading in astrakhan exceeded the volume of official foreign trade operations.[114]

The growth of class demonstrations, combined with economic disorder, made radical social and economic measures imperative. However, the parliament of the 13th convocation, which opened in 1969 and whose deputies were, for the most part, large estate owners, and conservative-minded theologians, again strongly opposed any attempts to carry out the socio-economic reforms proposed by the more far-sighted members of the ruling classes. Only the small PDPA faction headed by Babrak Karmal and the deputies from other democratic groups that supported it came out resolutely in defence of the vital interests of the people, castigating the egoism and inconsistency of the leaders of the right-wing and pro-government camp. Speeches by deputies were broadcast over the radio and so became known to the public. The conflict between the legislative and executive branches of power was widening, causing the critical political situation in the country to deteriorate still further.

The inability and unwillingness of the monarchy to solve urgent socio-economic problems, the deepening economic crisis, the mounting class struggle by the working people, and the growing confrontation between different social forces both within parliament and outside it were followed by serious differences within the ruling classes. Fearing possible class upheavals which could shake the entire system of the feudal-monarchic state, the more far-sighted members of the ruling classes opposed the monarchical regime, which was unable to speed up the national-bourgeois evolution. The monarchy, which had considerable legislative and executive powers invariably hampered the introduction of any reforms, even the most limited programmes of social change. The governments that succeeded each other* proved incapable of winning parliamentary approval for most of their bills. Serious differences in parliament itself rendered its work ineffective, which resulted in a crisis of state power.

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* In 1965-1973, the country was ruled by five successive governments.

The acute social contradictions which manifested themselves at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s also affected the army, and in particular the officers. The Afghan armed forces, with 90,000 officers and men, had undergone considerable modernisation in the 1960s, The measures taken to update military technology and training had affected the social composition of the officer corps, which underwent the intensive political polarisation typical of all sections of society in that period. The senior officers, most of whom were from families belonging to the feudal aristocracy, the wealthy merchant estate and the top bureaucracy, supported the existing social system, while most of the junior officers came from the urban population and partly from among the working people. Many of them had been trained abroad where they became acquainted with other socio-political systems and ideologies and could compare the level of socio-economic development in their own country and in other countries. On returning home they saw the backwardness of Afghanistan and the miserable conditions of its people, and came gradually to realise that the ruling elite was riddled with corruption.

Despite the brainwashing of servicemen in the spirit of loyalty to the monarchy, oppositional political views were spreading among the officers. The polarisation among them was accelerated by the struggle of ideas going on outside the army. In the early 1970s, many officers gravitated towards democratic political groups and supported them. In particular, in the late 1960s an underground PDPA organisation was formed in the army and brought together progressive-minded officers.

In a situation of general political instability, the Abdul Zahir government survived a mere year and a half, bringing nothing new either in political administration or in the economic system. The political leaders who succeeded each other did not possess any real power. None of them could become the prime minister without the king's support. Therefore the head of the government, even if he was a reformist, was unable to put forward a programme that ran counter to the interests of the monarchy. Musa Shafiq, who headed the new cabinet in December 1972, was exactly such a leader.

The Anti-Monarchist Coup and the Proclamation of a Republic

The critical situation in Afghanistan called for radical changes that would affect the entire structure of the socio-political institutions and the economic foundations of society. As there was no political party in the country that would enjoy mass support and could head a strong opposition, it was the army that toppled the doomed regime. On the night of July 16, 1973, a group of officers led by former Prime Minister Muhammad Daoud, staged a virtually bloodless coup. The monarchy was overthrown and Afghanistan was proclaimed a republic. The new regime was immediately supported by the garrisons and the population of most of the big cities, which demonstrated once again the total lack of popular support for the overthrown monarchy. King Muhammad Zahir Shah, who was staying in Italy at the time of the coup, abdicated from the throne a month later. The supreme body of state power was now the Central Committee of the Republic. Most of the officers who took part in or led the coup became members of the council.

The coup had been prepared and carried through, among others, by members of several political organisations. Among them were supporters of the PDPA, who formed the left wing in the republican regime. In the government formed in August 1973 four ministerial posts were occupied by members and supporters of the PDPA. At the same time, people who represented the interests of the ruling classes, who were opposed to the monarchical regime and who wanted reforms to speed up the national-bourgeois revolution, which was expected to strengthen the class basis of their power, occupied a strong position in the state apparatus and in the army. This group was headed by Muhammad Daoud and his brother Muhammad Naim. Thus, the governing bodies of the republic were composed of a socially heterogeneous but at the first stage politically united group.

On July 17 Muhammad Daoud addressed the nation over the radio to explain the aims of the coup. Conditions should be created, he said, in which the people, "especially the poorer sections of the population and the youth", could contribute to the country's development. That was his "only goal", he declared, and one which could be attained by establishing "genuine and reasonable democracy". The basis of that democracy, according to Daoud, should be "the granting of all rights to the people and a full recognition of the principles of national sovereignty". He accused the toppled monarchical regime of violating the principles of the constitution and announced the creation of a "new, republican system that fully accorded with the spirit of Islam". The struggle for peace, non-alignment, and friendship with all nations was proclaimed the main principle of foreign policy.[115]

In the first days following the coup the Central Committee of the Republic published decrees abrogating the 1964 constitution and dissolving parliament. The publication of private newspapers and magazines was suspended.

On August 23, Muhammad Daoud, who by the decision of the Central Committee of the Republic became the Prime Minister and the head of state, made his Appeal to the Afghan People, in which he set forth the main principles of the government programme. It contained a pledge to carry out "radical reforms in the economic, social and political life of the country". He denounced the economic policy of the toppled regime, which had taken no account of the needs of the nation and catered only for the narrow interests of the ruling elite. In agriculture, the programme said, there prevailed "backward relations of production and extremely primitive methods of farming which caused the impoverishment of the peasants, a curtailment of the national market and a shortage of agricultural products". In the political sphere the programme set the task of "concentrating power in the hands of the people and strengthening national sovereignty"; provisions were made for ensuring "equal rights for all people and popular participation in government". The programme promised to guarantee and expand democratic rights and freedoms, and also provided for the adoption of a new, republican constitution. The nationalities question, the programme pointed out, must be solved on the basis of the principles of "equality, brotherhood and friendship" among all the peoples of Afghanistan, and "all forms and types of discrimination" must be abolished.

As regards the economy, the main emphasis was on the priority development of the heavy industry, with every encouragement for private initiative and on efforts to combat competition by foreign capital and goods. A land reform "in the interest of the majority of the people, and the setting up of cooperatives" were to be the most important measures in agriculture. The programme contained promises to improve working conditions for office employees and workers. To that end, new labour legislation was to be drawn up. The programme also envisaged a number of measures to improve the system of education, develop national culture and democratise public life. The basic principles of foreign policy did not undergo any substantial change in the programme. It was announced that the Republic of Afghanistan would "take part in the struggle to ensure peace and security, settle international conflicts and secure the success of the policy of detente". In the concluding part the programme formulated its main task, which was to "put an end to social inequality and to eliminate the poverty and backwardness which had existed in the country for centuries and obstructed the strengthening of political, and the achievement of economic independence for the state". It also stated that the reforms should be carried out without "haste and excesses, putting one's faith in God and avoiding delusions". It was impossible to accomplish this task, the programme said, unless "all the national progressive and patriotic forces in the country are united in one broad front".[116]

Thus, the programme of Daoud's republican government, vague and declarative as it was in parts, reflected many of the demands put forward by the democratic forces of the country before the coup. Therefore it was widely supported by the population, which saw in it a way to major reforms for the benefit of the working people and to the democratisation of public life. The participation of the democratic forces, including the radical left, in the higher echelons of power largely determined the content of the programme.

In the first months after the abolition of the monarchy the republican government carried through a number of important measures in the socio-economic sphere, which affected a considerable part of the population. This was done on the initiative of the left forces and with their active support. The government made efforts to stabilise prices of prime necessity goods. District committees of the poor were set up in Kabul with the aid of the PDPA to combat profiteering and control trading operations of small shop-keepers. The central authorities fixed the prices on staple foodstuffs and price-lists were put up in every shop. The police were instructed to see that the regulations governing retail trade be observed and profiteering prevented. A campaign was launched to combat bribery, corruption and smuggling.

During this initial period the government also announced plans to draw up new labour legislation. Some measures to improve the conditions of workers and clerical staff were taken even before the new labour legislation was adopted. The 7.5-hour working day and maximum 45-hour working week were introduced at state-owned enterprises. Overtime work was to receive additional remuneration. The government doubled the minimum wage for industrial workers (from 450 to 900 afghanis). Apprentices at industrial enterprises began to receive wages. The right to paid leave and social insurance was legalised and the pension fund was increased.[117]

The Supreme Economic Council, set up late in 1973, was to deal with long-term planning and to coordinate the work of key industries and farming. In that period some private industrial companies charged with embezzlement, bribery and smuggling were nationalised. Among them was Spinzar, a major textile company. In the autumn of 1973 the Industrial Development Bank of Afghanistan was founded. In 1974 a new law was adopted regulating foreign and local investment and limiting the operation of local private and foreign capital to the light and food industries, with the share of foreign capital in those industries not to exceed 49 per cent.[118] Under this same law easier terms were provided for local entrepreneurs. In 1974 all private banks in the country were nationalised.[119] In 1973-1974 some measures began to be effected in the financial sphere. In 1974 direct taxes were increased by 60 per cent as against 1972 and accounted for 11 per cent of the budget revenue. After the adoption of a new law on customs and on tightening control over foreign trade, which became the monopoly of the state, customs duties on imports also increased in 1974 by 60 per cent over the 1972 level.[120]

In place of the previously adopted five-year plan for the 1973-1977 period, the government drew up a new, seven-year plan for the period from 1976 to 1982. It envisaged the construction of over 200 socio-economic projects, with priority given to the building of large dams, irrigation systems, hydro-electric power stations and roads, to the mechanisation of farming, and to mining mineral deposits.[121]

In agriculture the republican government began work on a draft land reform law. Before the law was adopted, landless and land-hungry peasants were given plots from state-owned newly-irrigated land. Land was received by slightly more than 5,000 peasant families, that is less than 1 per cent of the peasants who, according to official data, either had no land at all, or owned tiny plots and lived in poverty. The Law on Land Reform was promulgated on August 6, 1975, and announced the restriction of land ownership to 20 hectares of irrigated land. The surplus was to be handed over to the peasants for a ransom.[122]

The initial period of the republican regime saw attempts to reform the education system. The main emphasis was on increasing the number of schools, on reorganising secondary education and promoting vocational training. The government increased allocations for primary education. A national department to combat illiteracy was set up. All private schools, including those functioning at mosques, were placed under state control.

However, the republican regime began gradually to depart from its initial programme. Muhammad Daoud and his rightist associates felt that the presence of representatives of democratic forces in the higher echelons of power was a burden on them, for their activity naturally led to the expansion of democratic changes in the interests of broad sections of the population and undermined or weakened the economic and political positions of the traditional ruling classes closely associated with the feudal-monarchical structure.

As the regime stabilised politically, the personal positions of Muhammad Daoud and his closest associates grew stronger. Having occupied the posts of head of state, prime minister, foreign minister and minister of defence, and capitalising on democratic slogans, Muhammad Daoud managed to win the support of various sections of society. He was trusted by many entrepreneurs and the new bureaucrats, who were undisturbed by his shallow reforms, which did not exceed the limits of the bourgeois system. At the same time the democratic purport of the government programme appealed to liberal-minded intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie. The promises to carry out a land reform "in the interest of the majority" won Muhammad Daoud the support of a large part of the peasantry. And, last but not least, the army, especially young officers who after the coup felt to be an influential political force, were on his side.

Having thus obtained real political power and strengthened his influence among various sections of the population, Muhammad Daoud began, with the support of the rightists, gradually to oust the leftists, who did not enjoy wide support among the masses and lacked unity, from the state apparatus. In March 1974, Pacha Gul Wafadar, Minister of Frontier Affairs, was removed from his post and appointed ambassador to Bulgaria,[123] and a month later Abdul Hamid Mohtad, Minister of Communications, was dismissed and removed from the Central Committee of the Republic.[124] Both were supporters of Khalq. Faiz Muhammad (a supporter of Parcham), a leader of the anti-monarchist coup and then the Minister of the Interior, was first appointed Minister of Frontier Affairs and then ambassador to Indonesia. Some time later, Minister of Agriculture Ghilani Bakhtari was removed from the government and Chief of Military Police Mauladad and Chief of the Republican Guard Ahmad Ziya were dismissed from their posts. All of them were Parcham supporters. An increasing role in the Central Committee of the Republic, the state apparatus and the army was now played by Muhammad Naim, Daoud's brother, who had links with the Muslim Brothers and was a leader of the rightists, by Sayed Abdulillah, Minister of Finance, General Ghulam Haider Rasuli, Commander of the Central Forces, known for his anti-communist views, and others. In November 1975 the king's son-in-law, General Abdul Wali, former Commander of the Central Forces, who before the events of July 17, 1973, had been preparing a fascist-type coup, and his closest associates, all rabid monarchists who had been prosecuted, were released from prison. They were given the opportunity to emigrate to Italy, where they joined the royal family.

During the initial period of republican rule, when a number of the reforms envisaged in the government programme were under way, some members of the ruling classes began to express doubts regarding the government's policy. Some of the big landowners and tribal khans, rich comprador merchants and a part of the conservative Muslim clergy, alarmed by the radical character of the programme proclaimed by the regime and its first practical measures, came out against the reforms. Dissatisfied at the leftists' influence in the apparatus of central power, those forces embarked, immediately after the overthrow of the monarchy, on organised anti-government actions.

A plot, led by former prime minister Maiwandwal, to overthrow the republican government, was discovered in September 1973. Among those involved were top army officers and members of the wealthy commercial bourgeoisie. The conspirators were arrested. According to official press reports, Maiwandwal committed suicide in prison.[125] Another coup was attempted in December 1973. Its leader was Habibullah Rahman, former chief of the security service. After the plot had been discovered, those involved were arrested and five of its leaders were executed.[126]

July 1975 saw the largest anti-government action—an armed rebellion which spread to a number of the eastern regions. At the centre of the plot were the Muslim Brothers and the Muslim Youth, who declared that their aim was to topple the republican government and create an Islamic state. They were joined by Shula-yi Jawed and Setem-i Melli. Army units were used to quell the rebellion. Official quarters in Kabul voiced their opinion that certain forces in the CENTO bloc, who wished to put an end to the democratic changes in Afghanistan, had a hand in the plot. The weapons taken away from the rebels were of US and Chinese make.

As he squashed the rightist opposition, Daoud also built up pressure on the left forces. Central and local government bodies were purged of left and democratic elements. The Daoud regime was gradually showing its class essence. It went back on its main promises contained in the government programme. Thus, the 1974 labour legislation did not grant the working people the right to form trade unions. The Land Reform Law, promulgated in 1975, burdened the peasants with many years of redemption payments for the redistributed landowners' lands. On the other hand, big landowners were granted all kinds of benefits. No time limit was set for implementing the reform, which called in question the effectiveness of the planned agrarian changes, all the more so as many of the landowners began to divide their land among relatives and confidential agents. The seven-year plan for social and economic development adopted in 1976 envisaged the growth of agricultural and industrial output, but failed to create conditions for a radical change of social relations in the country. Abandoning the idea of mustering domestic resources to fulfil government plans, Muhammad Daoud, just like his predecessors, relied mainly on foreign financial aid.

Beginning with the mid-1970s the growing social contradictions began seriously to affect the foreign policy of the ruling quarters in Afghanistan. Alarmed by the growing activity of the democratic public and by mounting popular discontent, they established closer contacts with foreign reaction. Without discontinuing economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the Daoud regime extended its contacts with the ruling quarters in some Middle Eastern countries, above all with the shah's regime in Iran. Some of the major economic programmes now hinged on financial aid from the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf which cooperated closely with neocolonialist forces. Iran agreed to grant Afghanistan a lavish loan (about $2,000 million) for the construction of economic projects. It was planned, for example, to build a trans-Afghan railway from the Iranian-Afghan border, through Herat, Qandahar and Kabul, to Peshawar. The project had been designed by French experts. Official quarters in Kabul, prompted by Iranian leaders, even suggested that a branch line towards the Indian Ocean might possibly be built. The stratagem of Iranian quarters associated with the West was to sap traditional Afghan-Soviet cooperation and draw Afghanistan into the orbit of the political influence of imperialism and its allies in the region.

Continuing their persecution of the left, Muhammad

Daoud and his closest associates increasingly concentrated political power in their hands. At the end of 1976, in order to legally justify the ban on progressive groups, the ruling quarters announced the formation of the National Revolution Party, which was given a monopoly of political activity. In November 1976, Muhammad Daoud announced the creation of the party's Central Council which consisted of five rightist cabinet ministers.

The Loy Jirgah session held in Kabul in January 1977 marked the turning point in the evolution of the structure of the republican power. The Loy Jirgah elected Muhammad Daoud President of the Republic and approved a new, republican constitution. The people and the progressive forces were not allowed to take part in the elaboration and discussion of the draft. The new Constitution legalised the power of the dominating classes and the structure of power that took shape after the 1973 coup. Important legislative and executive functions were given to the President. The constitutional extension of the powers of the head of state was to some extent motivated by the political ambitions of Muhammad Daoud, who sought to concentrate all power in his own hands. Article 40 of the Constitution proclaimed a one-party system in Afghanistan, with the National Revolution Party (NRP) being the ruling party. The party was given exceptional prerogatives: only members of the NRP could be presidential nominees or elected to parliament. The National Revolution Party was given the right to determine the main directions of domestic and foreign policy and to control the activities of all sections of the state apparatus. Since the NRP was not a mass organisation, all political power was actually concentrated in the hands of Muhammad Daoud and his closest associates. In other words, the 1977 Constitution legalised the political power that had taken shape by that time—the regime of the personal dictatorship of the Muhammad Daoud.

The Constitution proclaimed the formation of a one-chamber parliament, elections to which were scheduled for 1979. By postponing parliamentary elections for two years, Daoud gave himself more opportunity to take personal legislative decisions, thus legalising the authoritarian form of government. Despite the relatively democratic character of both the election mechanism and the composition of parliament (under the Constitution, 50 per cent of its deputies were to represent the workers and peasants), its functions were limited to taking decisions concerning the budget, ratifying state treaties and sending armed forces abroad. At the head of the government was the President, who was simultaneously the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Judicial power was also controlled by the President, who now had the right to appoint judges.

Thus, the Constitution, having formalised the exceptionally broad rights and prerogatives of the President in the absence of a parliament, public organisations, political parties and a free press, legalised his dictatorial rule. Daoud's power was to be further consolidated by the direct subordination of the army to the President and by its participation in state policy-making through the Supreme Council of the Army, also headed by Muhammad Daoud. Deprived of a right to legislative initiative, the Central Committee of the Republic continued a purely formal existence.

The introduction of a one-party system meant a ban on all other political parties and groups. The PDPA had to go underground. Faced with a real threat not only to its activities but to its very existence, both its groups—Khalq and Parcham—set about building up party unity. In March 1977, representatives of both groups met to discuss ways of settling their differences and achieving unity. The unity conference of the PDPA Central Committee, held in July 1977, was attended by the leaders of both factions. It passed a decision to elaborate a programme of action and to carry through the organisational merger of the two groups. The conference elected a new Central Committee which consisted of 30 members. As at the First Congress of the Party, Nur Muhammad Taraki was elected General Secretary and Babrak Karmal, Secretary of the Central Committee. The question of putting an end to the dictatorship of Muhammad Daoud was put on the agenda for the first time at the plenary meeting.

After the conference the party, overcoming the split and rallying its members, began a campaign to mobilise the working people and all progressive forces for the struggle against the anti-people, pseudo-republican regime.

Party membership was growing rapidly, and so was its prestige among the people. The network of party cells was expanding in the capital and in the provinces. The party paid special attention to work among servicemen, and therefore it created and strengthened its party organisation in the army. Apart from patriotic officers taking part in party work were sergeants and soldiers.

The virtual refusal of the Daoud regime to carry through the radical reforms proclaimed in its programme led to a deterioration in the economic conditions of the urban and rural working people. Despite the output growth in industry and farming, the living standards of the overwhelming majority of the population continued to drop because the Daoud regime had left unchanged the forms of ownership and the system of income distribution.

Afghanistan remained one of the world's poorest and most underdeveloped countries: in 1977 its per capita national income was a mere 162 dollars. The greater part of the GNP was produced in the traditional natural and small-scale commodity sectors of the national economy. The modern branches of the manufacturing industry were producing only 3.3 per cent of the GNP. Nearly 70 per cent of the able-bodied population were engaged in agriculture, but due to the extremely low level of the productive forces and the persisting vestiges of the pre-capitalist relations of production, more than half of the arable land was left uncultivated. Afghanistan had to import 85 per cent of its sugar, and a large part of its requirements in grain and fats were met through imports. A great number of farmers were deep in debt to money-lenders, paying them annual interest of up to 45 per cent. About one-third of peasant families had no land of their own. Almost 2.5 million people in the country were nomads or semi-nomads.

The archaic feudal and semi-feudal forms of landownership, unrestrained usury which brought misery to millions of peasants, and growing agrarian overpopulation led to the further impoverishment of the peasants. In 1977 there were over 600,000 peasant families that either worked for landowners as sharecroppers or owned small plots of land not larger than 0.5 hectare. About 40,000 big landowners owned the greater part of all the cultivated land, and the best at that. The unresolved agrarian problem added to the tensions in the countryside.

Various regions in Afghanistan were at different development levels. For instance, Badakhshan, Hazarajat, Kunar and the region populated by the Pashtun tribes in the south-east and the south lagged far behind Kabul, Herat and some other provinces in economic, social and cultural development.[127] Other signs of backwardness were numerous groups among the rural and urban population closely linked with pre-capitalist economic structures and retaining many features of the traditional social organisation; the numerically small and weak industrial proletariat, which hardly numbered 50,000; the tenacious vestiges and traditions of communal and patriarchal (tribal) organisation, particularly among the Pashtuns and also among the Baluchis and Braguis inhabiting the southern regions; and, as a result, the considerable influence still enjoyed among the local population by the so-called traditional leaders, such as tribal khans, maliks and sardars, and by the Muslim clergy.

This uneven development of various regions was compounded by the national (ethnic) heterogeneity of the population and the ages-old tensions between the upper strata of the Pashtuns (Afghans) and the national-ethnic minorities, particularly in the northern and central parts of the country. In some regions, as in Hazarajat and Badakhshan, the national tensions were aggravated by sectarian differences between the Sunnites (Pashtuns) and Shiites, and also the Ismaelites who made up a significant part of the population in Hazarajat and Badakhshan.

In industrial development the main stress still was on foreign aid, which was used for the most part for the expansion of the economic infrastructure, thereby facilitating private capitalist enterprise. Part of foreign loans and credits, as a result of inadequate accounting and their poorly organised distribution, was pocketed by the ruling elite infected with the corruption that had marked it under the monarchy. Afghanistan's foreign debt was rising every year, to reach $1,000 million in 1977. Accordingly, the total sum of payments to clear off the debt was increasing and accounted for a considerable portion of the state budget spending.

The traditional system of state administration, with its characteristic red tape, bribery, embezzlement and corruption, offered the ruling classes ample opportunities to plunder the country. The big bourgeoisie and the landowners were transferring a large part of their income abroad. The ruling elite was no better. The royal family, which lived abroad and had hundreds of millions of dollars deposited in West European and American banks, received a monthly pension and income from its property, including property in land, which the Daoud regime did not touch.

Most of Afghanistan's population were engaged in hard labour and lived on the verge of starvation assailed by want, ignorance and disease. About 88 per cent of the people were illiterate and only 28.8 per cent of children attended schools, 70 per cent of which were in a dilapidated state. There were only 71 hospitals with 3,600 beds per 16 million of the population and 84 per cent of the physicians were employed in Kabul.

Political parties were banned, and labour unions and other organisations of the working people did not exist.

The Daoud regime came out to eliminate the gains of the republic's initial period, sweeping away whatever there remained of democracy. At the end of 1977 and early in 1978 the political situation in the country grew explosive after the regime launched severe repression against the left. In December 1977 arrests were made among PDPA members and supporters. The ruling elite, with Daoud at its head, rallied the rightist forces around themselves in a bid to check the spreading dissatisfaction with dictatorial rule. A number of influential persons close to Daoud maintained close contacts with the Muslim Brothers and other reactionary groups. The last patriots were removed from the government. Muhammad Hasan Shark, first deputy President, who was respected by the progressive public, was dismissed from his post and appointed ambassador to Japan.

The mounting discontent was expressed in different ways. Spontaneous protest actions by the population and rebellions among the Pashtun tribes flared up now and again, many of those actions culminated in clashes with the army. The situation was aggravated by frequent instances of arson, robbery and terrorism. On November

16, 1977, Ali Ahmad Khuram, Minister of Planning, one of the most efficient cabinet ministers, was assassinated in the centre of Kabul.

Unable to cope with the rising tide of popular discontent and to root out the causes of the extremely acute social contradictions, the authorities increasingly resorted to violence.

The political crisis culminated in the assassination, on April 17, 1978, of Mir Akbar Khyber, a PDPA leader who enjoyed great popularity among the workers, an organiser of the first mutual-aid funds, the prototype of the future trade unions, at Kabul industrial enterprises. This political assassination evoked strong indignation among the Kabul population. The funeral, which took place on April 19, 1978, grew into a political demonstration. The funeral procession was joined by thousands of people from all walks of life—workers, peasants from nearby villages, students, handicraftsmen, white-collar workers and numerous progressive intellectuals. The procession was led by PDPA leaders. The people who took part in the demonstration carried red banners and posters saying "Down with tyranny!" and "Long live democracy!". The funeral train passed through the central streets. A meeting was held in front of the presidential palace and the US embassy. The speakers at the meeting lashed the regime's policy and protested against political terror. The fact that a large number of people attended the funeral of Mir Akbar Khyber testified to the growing prestige and influence of the PDPA among the popular masses.

Aware of the broad popularity of the PDPA, which, in fact, had become a nucleus of organised opposition to the regime, Daoud and his men decided to remove the party leadership and the activists. On April 25, the PDPA leaders Nur Muhammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal, Nur Ahmad Nur, Anahita Ratebzad, Ghulam Dastagir Panjsheri and dozens of party activists were arrested on false charges of criminal actions against the state.

The PDPA supporters responded by raising to revolutionary action the army units loyal to them on April 27, 1978 (Saur 7, 1357, according to the Afghan calendar). The insurgents were soon joined by the rest of the Afghan army.

As a result of their effective action, the Daoud regime was overthrown and power went to the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces of Afghanistan.

The Victory of the National-Democratic April Revolution and the Foundation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

1

The national-democratic revolution on April 27, 1978, was the logical and inevitable result of the mounting antagonistic contradictions between the overwhelming majority of the population and a handful of exploiters who for centuries had misappropriated the fruits of their labour.

The PDPA, which led the armed uprising, sought to resolve in practice and in the interest of all the peoples of Afghanistan, big and small, the pressing problems of national development; to eliminate the national inequality inherited from the past; and to provide conditions for gradually drawing the country's peoples ever closer together on the basis of equal rights, economic and cultural progress and joint participation in building a new Afghanistan.

The goals, proclaimed by the Party way back in 1966, could be achieved only as a result of the April Revolution which made the PDPA the ruling party. The realisation of these goals met the vital interests of the absolute majority of the population, including the national bourgeoisie, the greater part of the officials, the Muslim clergy, and the army—officers and men. Therefore the revolution met actually no resistance. Even the commanding officers of the Central Corps' divisions quartered near Kabul did nothing to support the Daoud government, and the call for help by the Minister of Defence, General G. H. Rasuli, was ignored.

No one in the country, either among the civilian population, in the police or the army, came to the defence of the authoritarian Daoud regime which had fully discredited itself and met the egoistic interests of a handful of rich landlords (mostly Pashtuns) and the big bourgeoisie, merchants for the most part, having close ties with foreign capital. That is why the PDPA-led revolutionary uprising on April 27 ended in victory.

In the evening on that day the Kabul radio broadcast the statement by the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces of Afghanistan that all power in the country had passed to the people and the armed forces had taken it upon themselves to defend the country and ensure the national independence of its people.

The first decree of the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, published on April 29, 1978, said that the revolutionary uprising of the patriotic officers and men of Afghanistan, which had taken place by the will of the people on Saur 7, 1357, which signalled the start of the national democratic revolution, put an end to the despotic Daoud regime within less than 24 hours and laid the foundations of a national-democratic system in Afghanistan.

In order that the revolution accomplish its tasks fully and effectively, the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces handed down its powers to the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and itself became part of it.

The Revolutionary Council proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) and elected General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee Nur Muhammad Taraki President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister of the DRA. Babrak Karmal, who was a Political Bureau member and Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee, occupied the posts of Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Deputy Prime Minister. Colonel Abdul Qader, commander and chief-of-staff of the air force and anti-aircraft defence, who headed the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces which exercised direct leadership of the revolutionary action, was appointed Minister of National Defence.

The Revolutionary Council appointed new governors and armed forces commanders. All the property that belonged to the members of the family of the former kings Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah and ex-President Muhammad Daoud was confiscated.

On May 1, the Revolutionary Council approved the list of the new government, the highest executive body. State activity began to be regulated by decrees of the Revolutionary Council and decisions of the DRA Government.

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan received broad international recognition. The first to recognise the new revolutionary government were the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, India, Mongolia, Czechoslovakia, Cuba and Poland. On May 5, 1978, Nur Muhammad Taraki was visited by Pakistani Ambassador in Kabul Ali Arshed who announced his country's recognition of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. On that day the DRA was recognised by Turkey, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Vietnam, Yugoslavia and Iran. On May 6, recognition of the DRA was announced on behalf of their governments by Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Ambassador of the USA, and by K. R. Crook, Ambassador of Great Britain; by the GDR, the FRG and Italy. A few days later the DRA was recognised by the People's Republic of China, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bangladesh, Japan, Canada, Australia, Nepal, Iraq, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Lebanon, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Kuwait, Jordan and other countries. On May 9, recognition of the DRA by Libya was announced to the Afghan government by a special envoy who had arrived in Kabul with a message from Muammar Kaddafi.

On May 9 that year the government issued the Main Directions of the Revolutionary Tasks of the DRA Government. Under that programme major progressive reforms began to be effected in Afghanistan.

The revolutionary government announced that its top priority task was to defend the country's territorial integrity, national sovereignty and independence and the gains of the April Revolution, and to build the unity of all national progressive and patriotic forces.

In *home policy* the emphasis was on eliminating economic backwardness, building an independent national economy, developing industry, modernising agriculture, and raising the living standards of the population. To that end, a number of radical social and economic reforms were planned—a democratic land reform for the benefit of working peasants and the abolition, with their help, of feudal and pre-feudal relations, the strengthening of the public sector in the economy through planning and by exercising effective control over the use of natural resources, democratisation of public life and solution of the national question in a democratic way. It was announced that the state apparatus should be purged of counter-revolutionaries and the army be strengthened. Provisions were made for guaranteeing democratic rights and freedoms and securing the political and economic interests of workers, peasants, officers, soldiers, handicraftsmen, intellectuals and other sections of the population. Measures were envisaged to introduce general compulsory and free primary education, to launch an effective campaign to combat illiteracy, to train scientific and technical personnel by expanding free secondary and higher education and vocational training, and to create a free public health service.

In *foreign policy* it was decided to pursue an independent policy of peace and positive and active neutrality and non-alignment on principles of peaceful coexistence; to promote goodneighbourly relations, friendship and co-operation with all neighbouring countries; to expand in every way the relations with the Soviet Union, to promote friendly relations with India; and to ensure friendly ties with Iran, Pakistan and China. The DRA supported the maintenance of world peace, general disarmament, dismantling military bases on foreign territory, and promotion of international detente.

The system of state administration was being restructured in the centre and in the periphery: new heads of divisions and districts and chiefs of government services were being appointed. The officials found guilty of embezzlement and corruption were removed from the organs of power.

Labour unions and women's and youth organisations were being formed. The low-paid brackets of workers and other employees received a pay rise. A decree was issued to introduce a new and fair system of distributing food among the workers and other employees of state-run industrial enterprises and offices and among servicemen. People's power took effective measures to lower the prices of foodstuffs and consumer goods.

Much prominence was given to measures on eliminating unemployment. The construction of new and expansion of the existing agricultural projects was expected to provide a large number of jobs. Already in the first months after the revolution the Ministry of Education offered jobs to 5,000 unemployed teachers. Housing construction was under way.

The government introduced free first medical aid and allocated considerable sums for purchasing the equipment and medicines required.

Juridical commissions were being set up to supervise the work to ensure democratic rights for the people. Aided by democratic social organisations, the courts and procurator's offices conducted investigation of the civil and criminal cases left after the Daoud regime. Nearly 10,000 people were released from prisons (many of them had been in detention without trial for 10 to 15 years).

Implementing the programme of compulsory and free school education, the revolutionary government returned to schools thousands of senior pupils who had been expelled under the Daoud regime. About 600 new schools and a few colleges were opened and hundreds of thousands of textbooks were printed and distributed among schoolchildren. A plan was drawn up for setting up new educational establishments of all types, in towns and in rural areas. Free literacy courses were established at many state offices in Kabul and in the provinces. More scientists, technicians and teachers were being trained. The Soviet Union assisted Afghanistan in accomplishing this important task.

Considerable attention was paid to cultural reforms: a national academy of sciences was set up and new newspapers and magazines were issued (not only in Pashtu and Dari but also in other languages spoken in the country).

Drawing women in socially useful work, the government paid special attention to eliminating illiteracy among them. Women were granted equal rights with men. The revolutionary authorities prohibited early marriages and payment of bride-money. A decision was passed on celebrating Women's Day on March 8 to commemorate the struggle for women's equality. More women became teachers, medical workers and office employees.

The Revolutionary Council issued a decree on easing the burden of debts to usurers for 11 million landless and land-hungry peasants. In the rural areas committees were set up from among representatives of the PDPA, local administrations and poor farmers for preparing and carrying out agrarian reforms. The state extended financial and technical aid to the peasants who wished to join in all kinds of farm cooperatives. Measures were taken to improve the life of impoverished nomads.

In November 1978, a plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee discussed and unanimously approved the bill on a land reform. An end was put to big landownership; no family in Afghanistan was allowed to own more than 30 jeribs (six hectares) of land. The surplus land was divided among landless and land-hungry peasants and farm labourers. As a result, about 290,000 peasant families received land plots free.

A five-year plan for social and economic development was drawn up and put into operation.

The revolutionary reforms being effected by the government were welcomed by the peasants, workers, handicraftsmen, impoverished nomads, small traders, intellectuals, patriotic sections of the national bourgeoisie, Muslim theologians and others.

All the reforms were being carried out with the active support and direct and voluntary participation of all patriots of Afghanistan, the national and religious customs and traditions of the peoples and tribes being observed. During the first year of the revolution the working people and numerous members of the national bourgeoisie donated hundreds of millions of afghanis to various funds established to carry through the democratic reforms.

Many outstanding Muslim theologians in the country voiced unreserved support for the Democratic Republic, the revolutionary government and the measures it had set out to effect.

There emerged new public movements, such as the voluntary labour movement, and competitions among factories and city districts.

The consistent pursuance by the PDPA and the government of the foreign policy of peace helped to strengthen the international positions of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

In September 1979, a DRA delegation headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki attended a summit conference of non-aligned countries in Havana.

The April Revolution offered good opportunities for expanding the relations of friendship and fruitful cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries: Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. On January 9, 1979, the DRA officially recognised the People's Revolutionary Council of Kampuchea.

The DRA's cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in trade, economy, science, technology and culture was developing on a stable long-term basis, to the mutual benefit of the sides, and acquired a new dimension.

In the economic and technical cooperation with the USSR the construction and servicing of over 120 projects continued practically in every sphere of the national economy; and so did designing and prospecting. The share of the USSR in assistance to Afghanistan exceeded 50 per cent. In 1979, the volume of Afghan-Soviet trade increased by more than 30 per cent and mounted to 323,900,000 roubles, against 215 million roubles in 1978.

The official friendly visit to the USSR of a DRA party and government delegation headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki on December 4-7, 1978, proved to be an outstanding event in the history of relations between the two countries. During that visit the sides signed the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the USSR and the DRA. The significance of this Treaty, signed for the benefit of both countries and in the interest of peace in Asia and the rest of the world, for the protection of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and the revolutionary gains of its people came to the fore when the DRA became the target of undeclared aggression launched by international imperialism and reaction. The sides signed also an agreement on setting up a standing inter-governmental Soviet-Afghan commission on economic cooperation.

During the Moscow talks the Soviet and Afghan sides reaffirmed their determination to carry on the struggle for peace and international security, for general and complete disarmament, for detente. They demonstrated the common views of the USSR and the DRA and their common approach to a large number of major international issues.

2

However, as progressive changes were being made, the revolution came up against serious difficulties caused by various factors. Some of these have been already mentioned earlier in the book: the extreme poverty and backwardness of Afghanistan; the absence of an experienced and sufficiently numerous working class steeled in class battles; and acute shortage of the required number of skilled personnel and leaders on all levels.

As was pointed out by the PDPA Central Committee in April 1980, in the post-revolutionary period "the traditions of democratic centralism and collective leadership were not adequately developed in the party. Therefore, important decisions were often made without thorough preliminary preparations."[128] The party, which for many years before the revolution had had to do underground work and had been subjected to severe repression and persecution by the reactionaries, lacked experience in administering the state and in economic and cultural development.

The PDPA lacked unity: there had emerged a group headed by Hafizullah Amin who after the victory of the revolution occupied the posts of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Amin sought to place his supporters in the key positions in the party and the government. Kindling factional struggle, he succeeded, in the summer and autumn of 1978, in removing from the leadership a large group of party leaders who were faithful to the revolution. In March 1979 he managed to take over the post of Prime Minister and early in 1979 he became the Minister of Defence. In September that same year Hafizullah Amin forcibly removed and then killed Nur Muhammad Taraki, after which he seized the posts of General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee and President of the Revolutionary Council.

Amin and his men used inadmissible methods in carrying out major reforms, such as the agrarian reform and the elimination of illiteracy among the adult population, distorting their progressive meaning. The traditions and religious beliefs of people were ignored and revolutionary law was grossly violated.

The difficulties experienced by the country were compounded many times over by the criminal actions of Amin and his group and were skilfully used by reactionaries at home and abroad.[129] Backed up by conservative and right-wing sections in some of the neighbouring states, who feared that the revolutionary events in Afghanistan would have a negative effect on the situation in their own countries, they began a vigorous struggle against the April Revolution and the goals it had proclaimed. A massive campaign was launched to misinform the population and many politically inexperienced and illiterate people believed that misinformation.

The Amin administration subjected peaceful residents, specifically in the border regions, to unjustified repressions. Thousands of refugees fled across the Afghan borders. Armed counter-revolutionary detachments were being formed and trained, with Afghan counter-revolutionary leaders receiving lavish material, financial and other assistance from various governmental and non-governmental organisations in the USA, some other Western countries and Muslim states. The activities of these detachments against the DRA, according to the information available, were not curbed but encouraged by the authorities of the countries in whose territory they had been formed and from where they made armed incursions into Afghanistan.

The April 1978 Revolution in Afghanistan (and the subsequent events in Iran and the collapse of the aggressive CENTO alliance), having exposed the weakness and vulnerability of the positions of international imperialism in the Middle East, considerably influenced the policy of the imperialists and their allies in that part of the world. The anti-popular and reactionary thrust of this policy and its aggressiveness increased. Its inspirers and organisers stepped up their efforts to form a united front of imperialist and pro-imperialist forces in the Middle East, spearheaded against the growing national liberation movement in the region.

The forces of international imperialism, having rapidly expanded their military presence in the Middle East and launched an unheard-of propagandist, psychological war against the DRA and its friends (against the Soviet Union, above all), pursued far-reaching goals. They were trying (and they still do) to reverse the revolutionary social, economic and political changes in the region. Their goal is to bring the peoples that have carried out a revolution back into the orbit of imperialist, neocolonialist influence and exploitation, to use them as an instrument of their reactionary global and regional strategy and policy. They seek to turn the countries of the region, which have broken away from the trammels of the imperialist anti-popular policy, into an instrument of torpedoing detente, increasing international tensions, and stepping up the arms race. They want to turn the region into an anti-Soviet bridgehead.

Thus, two opposite attitudes to the events in the country were clearly manifest practically right after the April Revolution and the formation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The forces of imperialism and its reactionary allies assumed a hostile attitude to the revolutionary developments in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union and other peace-loving peoples came resolutely to the aid of the DRA and its people.

As is seen from the evidence provided by numerous eyewitnesses and from the research done by outstanding Orientalists, the first camps for training terrorists and saboteurs against revolutionary Afghanistan were set up by Afghan reactionary emigrés in the north-western part of Pakistan already a few weeks after the April Revolution.

In March 1979 the right-wingers staged a rebellion in Herat, the third largest city in Afghanistan, and seized army barracks, the arsenal, and food storehouses. Counter-revolutionary armed actions continued even after the rebellion was put down.

The obtaining situation could not only lead to the loss of the revolutionary gains by the Afghan people. It also threatened the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Afghanistan.

By the end of 1979 armed counter-revolutionary detachments operated in 18 of Afghanistan's 26 provinces. Their acts of sabotage and terror caused heavy damage to the economy, thwarted progressive reforms launched soon after the revolution, and brought suffering and death to vast numbers of people. During 1979 the sown area in the country shrank by almost 9 per cent, the output of cereals dropped by 10 per cent, and that of industrial crops, by 25-30 per cent.[130] The national per capita income for that year went down by almost 14 per cent and amounted to as little as $139.

Analysing the situation taking shape in Afghanistan and along its south-eastern borders as a result of the activity of armed counter-revolutionary groups which had infiltrated from abroad, many observers and analysts concluded that it was becoming increasingly dangerous not only for the destiny of the April Revolution, but also for the unity of Afghanistan. There is no doubt that the extensive aid and support rendered to the counter-revolutionaries from abroad were not only interference into the DRA's internal affairs but were tantamount to aggression as it is defined in the widely known documents adopted by the United Nations.

The danger looming over the April Revolution and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was seen clearly not only by foreign political scientists, but also by Afghan leaders who, proceeding from the provisions of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation, signed between the USSR and the DRA on December 5, 1978, and in keeping with Article 51 of the UN Charter, repeatedly requested the Soviet Union during 1979 to send Soviet Army units into the DRA. In response to these repeated requests a limited contingent of Soviet troops was sent to Afghanistan.

3

The situation which obtained in Afghanistan at the end of 1978 and all through 1979 caused growing concern and protest among many leading and rank-and-file members of the PDPA and among non-party patriotic-minded people from every section of Afghan society. Dissatisfaction with the activities of Hafizullah Amin was spreading. It was becoming obvious that only by overthrowing the Amin regime would it be possible to translate into practice the ideals of the April Revolution and improve the situation in the PDPA and in the whole of the country. By the end of 1979, left without support in the PDPA, in the army and among the people, Amin found himself in complete isolation. On December 27, 1979, the patriotic majority in the PDPA, in the Revolutionary Council and in the armed forces overthrew the Amin regime. That action, which was received with understanding by the world progressive and peace-loving public, and which was welcomed by all genuine patriots in Afghanistan, foiled the schemes of the imperialists and their reactionary allies in the region and prevented them from isolating the DRA, from leaving it all alone, without international aid, confronted with the joint forces of reactionaries abroad and counter-revolutionaries at home. If it were not for the timely Soviet help, Babrak Karmal noted later, there would be no free, independent and sovereign Afghanistan today.

On December 28, 1979, a new Revolutionary Council Presidium and a new government were formed..The posts of the President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister were occupied by Babrak Karmal, the newly-elected General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee. Among the ministers in the new government were PDPA members and non-party people. Shortly before that, many of the ministers had been released from prisons, while others had re-emerged after being underground.

The events of December 27-28, 1979, signalled the start of a new stage in the April Revolution. As a result, the popular and progressive character of the national-democratic revolution, as was pointed out by the PDPA Central Committee, grew stronger and obtained new and better conditions for development. The necessary prerequisites were created for restoring the organisational, political and ideological unity of the PDPA undermined by the divisive actions of Hafizullah Amin, and for restoring in the party an atmosphere of revolutionary principles, sincerity and trust. It became possible to ensure democratic liberties for the peoples of Afghanistan and genuine respect for their traditions and religious beliefs, and to improve their living standards.

The new stage of the April Revolution also provided the opportunity for implementing the main provisions of the PDPA programme envisaging the merger of all patriotic, progressive and democratic forces in the country to form a broad Fatherland Front.

Already in the first weeks after the start of the new stage of the April Revolution, the PDPA Central Committee, the Revolutionary Council and the DRA government set the main tasks and objectives in economic, social, cultural and foreign policies with a view to protecting the gains of the

April Revolution, state sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRA.

In *the political and social sphere* the tasks and objectives were:

—to consolidate the unity of all peoples—big and small—and tribes in Afghanistan, to eliminate completely any discrimination against the citizens of Afghanistan on grounds of their nationality, language, race, tribe, sect, origins, education, sex, residence, or property status;

—gradually to overcome the existing differences in the levels of economic, social and cultural development of various regions;

—to ensure for the Muslims of Afghanistan all the necessary conditions, full freedom and reliable protection in performing the religious rites of Islam, render assistance to the ulemas in exercising their duties;

—to promote democracy on principles of collective leadership and democratic centralism; steadily to expand the participation of the working people and their organisations that are united in the broad Fatherland Front under the leadership of the PDPA, in running the state and society;

—fully to eradicate such vestiges of the past as despotism, corruption, lawlessness, arbitrariness, bureaucracy, embezzlement, chauvinism, and local nationalism;

—constantly to improve the work of the bodies charged with state security and law and order so as to provide conditions for the peaceful life and work of the peoples of Afghanistan,

—to strengthen the DRA Armed Forces in every way.

In *the economic sphere* the following tasks and objectives were set:

—to develop the economy with a view to raising the living standards and well-being of the peoples of every family, and every working man;

—to promote various forms of collective labour, their organisation and gradual introduction in all the key sectors of the economy;

—to improve the living and working conditions of the working class and other working people; to provide jobs to the unemployed, especially young people;

—to give every assistance to the national private sector in light industry, handicrafts, trade, transport, agriculture, and livestock breeding, and to protect it from the ruinous competition of foreign capital.

In *the cultural area* the main tasks and objectives were:

—to raise in every way the educational, cultural, professional and technical level of the popular masses;

—to preserve and develop everything that is best and most valuable in the rich cultural heritage of the peoples of Afghanistan;

—to provide favourable conditions for the creative work of the Afghan intelligentsia.

In *foreign policy* the tasks and goals of the DRA at this new stage of the April Revolution envisaged consistent adherence to the principles of peaceful coexistence, non-alignment, positive neutrality and international solidarity and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and with the revolutionary forces of our time.

The DRA reaffirmed its being interested in promoting every form of bilateral, regional and international cooperation, its preparedness to settle its relations with neighbouring states in accordance with the generally recognised principles and norms of peaceful coexistence, and its resolve to respect the purposes and principles of the UN Charter in the efforts of the United Nations to ensure a lasting world peace, halt the arms race and end the dangerous escalation of international tensions.

The PDPA Central Committee, the Revolutionary Council and the DRA Government affirmed that the revolutionary changes taking place in the country were irreversible, and expressed their resolve to ensure the advancement of Afghanistan from backwardness to progress.

The tasks and objectives put forward by the PDPA Central Committee, the Revolutionary Council and the DRA Government were formulated following an analysis of the social, economic and political situation in the country at the initial stage of the national-democratic revolution. Their purpose was to eliminate the harmful consequences of the blunders and crimes committed by Amin, gradually to overcome the harsh legacy of the pre-revolutionary past, to improve the living, educational and cultural standards of the Afghan people, and to establish a firm political alliance (within the framework of the broad and united

Fatherland Front) between the working class and the peasants, handicraftsmen, intellectuals, other sections of the working people and also all patriotic forces favouring social progress and anti-imperialism. Measures were taken to improve the living conditions of the Afghan working people, and wages were increased considerably for low-paid workers. The state allocated considerable funds to provide free meals for the workers and other employees in the low-income bracket employed in the public sector of the national economy, and effected measures to regulate the prices of food and other vital consumer goods and medicines.

The tasks and objectives advanced by the People's Democratic Party and the revolutionary government of Afghanistan were intended to repulse internal and international counter-revolution and reaction, the right- and left-wing extremists and adventurers, to ensure peace in the country in order to carry out large-scale general democratic reforms with the active participation of the working people's organisations and under their control and, on that basis, to accomplish the tasks and attain the goals of the April Revolution.

4

Comparatively little time has passed since the onset of the new stage in the April Revolution. However, despite the considerable difficulties experienced by the country, extensive work has been done to attain the tasks and goals listed above. Of great importance in this respect were measures to rectify the criminal violations of revolutionary law perpetrated by Amin.[131]

The activity of the Afghan working people and their organisations was stepped up and began to play a growing role in the public and political life of society.

Early in the summer of 1980, trade unions functioning under PDPA guidance were set up at all state-owned and also at large mixed and private enterprises, both in Kabul and in the provinces.

At the end of May 1980, the first congress of Afghan teachers was held in Kabul. It concentrated, among other things, on measures to combat illiteracy. It was noted at the congress that over 30,000 literacy courses already functioning in the country were being attended by hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants and handicraftsmen.

The medical congress held in June 1980 passed a resolution on solving urgent problems involved in the development of the public health system.

In July 1980, the Central Council of the Trade Unions of Afghanistan held its first plenary meeting, which called on all Afghan working people to defend their country from the enemies of the April Revolution, to increase labour efficiency, build up the unity of all working people in the country, and to strengthen solidarity with the Soviet Union and all progressive forces in the world.

In August 1980, the Political Bureau of the PDPA Central Committee passed a resolution On the Role and Tasks of the Trade Unions of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. It outlined the main directions and forms of trade union activities and instructed the Central Council of the Afghan Trade Unions to elaborate and adopt the Rules of the DRA Trade Unions and the Statute on the Rights of Primary Trade Union Organistations. The resolution made it binding on all PDPA organisations, on ministries and state-run and mixed enterprises and institutions to render assistance in setting up primary trade union organisations. It helped to step up, expand and normalise the activities of the Afghan trade unions and to strengthen their ties with the working people.

The first congress of the Afghan trade unions, held early in March 1981, was attended by over 500 delegates from the provinces and by guests from 20 countries, including the Soviet Union. The congress discussed the results of the work done by the Central Council of the Trade Unions, approved their rules, emblem and flag and outlined prospects for the trade union movement in Afghanistan. It adopted a resolution strongly denouncing the actions of international reaction and imperialism against the DRA and the April Revolution.

Over the time passed since the start of the new stage in the April Revolution the Afghan trade unions have become a large and influential mass organisation functioning under the guidance of the PDPA.[132] Now they have a bigger role to play in the solution of problems related to the social and economic advancement of Afghanistan. Trade union members are active in forming groups to maintain law and order and to combat the counter-revolutionary elements and terrorist and sabotage groups infiltrated into the DRA. The trade unions help to set up libraries at industrial enterprises, and literacy courses. Special attention is paid to forming a "movement for voluntary labour" for the benefit of the revolution, which has been joined by tens of thousands of working people. The trade unions render considerable material aid to low-income and large families of factory and office workers.

The meeting of the Democratic Youth Organisation of Afghanistan (DYOA), held in July 1980, resolved to strengthen the unity and promote influence of this organisation primarily among workers and peasants. The first national conference of the DYOA late in September 1980 was attended by guests from 50 countries, including the Soviet Union. The conference called on all DYOA members to join law-and-order groups and armed youth detachments and to consider the rout of counter-revolutionary forces the chief goal of the younger generation. The newspaper *Darafshe Jawanan*, which began to be published with the DYOA's assistance in the autumn of 1980, came to play no mean role in mobilising Afghan young people for the defence of the revolution.

DYOA members, effective assistants of the PDPA in defending the revolution and effecting progressive reforms, explained to the working people the policy pursued by the PDPA and the DRA Government and fought against the forces of counter-revolution. The first Young Pioneer organisations were set up in the autumn of 1980 at the initiative of the DYOA and under its leadership. By the summer next year the total membership of the Young Pioneer organisations exceeded 20,000 members. Young Pioneer camps were set up for the poor families for the first time in the country.

In mid-September 1980 the founding congress of the Union of Journalists of Afghanistan was held in Kabul. It was attended by nearly 450 delegates from newspapers, magazines, radio, television, publishing houses, and the Bakhtar news agency.

The Union of Artists, set up in October 1980, united artists, actors, musicians, film makers and architects. Its foundation congress was attended by nearly 1,000 people. Around the same time, over 500 Afghan men of letters representing all the nationalities and ethnic groups of Afghanistan, met at the foundation congress of the Union of Writers.[133] The formation of these creative unions, as delegates to these congresses pointed out, helped to rally the Afghan public in support of the April Revolution.

The PDPA, the Revolutionary Council and the Government of the DRA, and also patriotic organisations paid much attention to ways and means of improving agriculture and solving the food problem (which is only natural for a country where the majority of the population are peasants and the economy is based on agriculture and the processing of farm produce). During the second stage of the land reform, planned for a term of three years, the state guaranteed the ownership of land and water by the peasants. Measures were taken to mechanise, with Soviet aid, the production of cotton, wheat and sugar beet. Farm-machine hiring stations were set up. The state helped to organise supply-and-marketing, producer and other cooperatives in the countryside. Measures were taken to reclaim arable land and increase crop yields. The purchasing prices of cotton and sugar beet were increased by 25 to 30 per cent. The state distributed seeds and chemical fertilisers among peasants at reduced prices (on credit to the poor) and helped them purchase farm implements. The first Cooperative Institute was set up. Teams formed in large cities by the DYOA went to the countryside to help the peasants. Self-defence detachments were formed from among the peasants.[134]

The country's first congress of rural cooperators, attended by 650 delegates, was convened in December 1980. It discussed the development of the cooperative movement, ways of overcoming economic and cultural backwardness in the Afghan countryside, improving the living and working conditions of peasants and handicraftsmen, boosting agricultural production, turning Afghan farming into a highly developed and effective branch of the national economy, reforming agrarian relations and, in the process, eliminating poverty and backwardness among peasants.

At the new stage of the April Revolution the revolutionary authorities of Afghanistan drew up a programme of progressive reforms to be implemented in Afghan agriculture for a few years, taking due account of the interests of peasants, the traditions and specific conditions of different regions, and the customs long established among the people. On June 20, 1981, the PDPA Central Committee and the DRA Council of Ministers passed a resolution On the Land Reform in the DRA to help improve the living conditions of peasants, regulate land tenure, and boost agricultural production.

As it was noted late in 1981 at the plenary meeting of the Central Council of Agricultural Cooperatives, the people's authorities assist the cooperatives a good deal, helping them to attract new members. The state provides the cooperatives with credits, fertilisers, seeds and farm implements (at reduced prices). The peasants were shown the advantages of agricultural production with the use of modern methods and instruments of labour.

The first machine and tractor stations have been set up in the country. Following a decision of the Revolutionary Council the debt to the state for 1978-81 was cancelled for 860,000 peasant families. Large sums have been earmarked for the repair and construction of irrigation canals and other hydrotechnical projects in Badakhshan, Qunduz, Parvan, Nimroz and other provinces, thereby enabling the country to irrigate tens of thousands of hectares of dry and virgin lands. As a result, the total harvest of the main crops in 1981 exceeded the 1980 results. The share of these crops increased in the Afghan exports, which is evidenced by the DRA's trade agreements with the USSR and also with India, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Japan, the Netherlands and other countries.

The decision of the Revolutionary Council to set up the Chief Board of Islamic Affairs at the DRA Council of Ministers contributed to the normalisation of the situation in the country. This decision was approved at Afghanistan's first conference of ulemas, held late in June and early in July 1980 and attended by over 800 people. The delegates to the conference voiced their support for the constructive processes going on in Afghanistan at the new stage of the April Revolution and denounced the campaign of misinformation on the position of Islam in the DRA conducted by the mass media in a number of countries. The conference was addressed by Babrak Karmal, who said that a new Muslim association was being established on the basis of profound respect for Islam and its principles of justice and equality. The decree issued by the Revolutionary Council in August 1981 allotted to Muslim religious institutions their lands and other property (so-called *waqfs*) and allowed the ulemas to retain the land surplus they had.

The major positive changes that had occurred in the country were legalised in the Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, approved by the Revolutionary Council, the supreme body of state power in the DRA, on April 20-21, 1980. *The Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan* consist of 68 articles grouped into 10 chapters. Chapter One points out that the DRA "is an independent democratic state belonging to all Muslim working people"; that the state "shall make efforts to ensure for the people a prosperous, happy, peaceful, secure and tranquil life"; that the power of the working people of the DRA" is based on the vast national fatherland front". Article 4 of the *Fundamental Principles* defines the PDPA as "the party of the working class and all the toilers of the country" and as "the guiding and mobilising force of society and state". Article 28 says that "the equality of rights among the citizens is ensured in all economic, political, social and cultural fields".

T*he Fundamental Principles* point out that "respect, observance and preservation of Islam as a sacred religion will be ensured" in the country and all Muslims are ensured "freedom of religious rites" (Article 5). Articles 17, 18, 19, 21, and 22 say that "the state preserves and protects all forms of ownership", and that it will preserve and protect private ownership according to law"; it "will encourage, protect and control private enterprises"; it "respects and guarantees ownership of the peasants and other landholders ... according to the provisions of law"; that the state encourages the participation of national entrepreneurs in the development of industry, the services, transport and agriculture and guarantees, "in accordance with law, the security of private investments with a view to developing national economy". It is pointed out also that property cannot be expropriated from its owner, the exception being "expropriation of private property against payment in accord with social justice and law".[135]

5

The consistent efforts of the PDPA, the Revolutionary Council, the DRA Government, and patriotic mass organisations working under their leadership to implement the ideals and attain the goals of the April Revolution, helped to stabilise the political situation in Afghanistan and to rally the working people and all patriotic forces (including the influential sections of the national bourgeoisie, the Muslim clergy and many tribal elders) round the revolutionary leadership headed by Babrak Karmal. The social base for counter-revolutionary activity was narrowed down. All this made it possible to withdraw some of the units of the limited contingent of Soviet troops sent in the country in December 1979, as their presence there was no longer necessary. This decision was published on June 22, 1980, and implemented at the end of the month.

Thanks to the PDPA's efforts to bring together and mobilise all patriotic, progressive and national-democratic forces of Afghanistan in defence of the April Revolution, it became possible to convene a conference of national patriotic forces in Kabul in December 1980. The conference was attended by almost 2,000 delegates of the PDPA, the trade unions, agricultural cooperatives, the Democratic Youth Organisation of Afghanistan, the Democratic Organisation of Afghan Women, the unions of writers, journalists and artists, and other social organisations, the business circles of the country (the Chambers of Commerce and Industry) Muslim theologians, and the Pashtun tribes.

The conference decided to form a National Fatherland Front and to set up a supreme organising commission in order to prepare and convene its inauguration congress.

The inauguration congress was held on June 15, 1981, in Kabul. It was attended by 940 delegates from all classes and sections of Afghan society. Of them, 340 represented workers and peasants. The congress was addressed by

Babrak Karmal with a report on the tasks and objectives of the National Fatherland Front (NFF).

The delegates to the inauguration congress unanimously approved the Rules of the National Fatherland Front and elected its leading bodies—the National Committee (95 members) and the Executive Committee (21 members). Saleh Muhammad Zeray, Political Bureau Member and Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee, was unanimously elected NFF Chairman. Four vice-chairmen were elected (among them Sayed Afghani, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Ulema of Afghanistan).

The formation of the National Fatherland Front was widely supported in the country. Public meetings were held, welcoming the formation of the Front and funds were raised to be donated to the Front's branches set up in the localities.

The significance and irreversible character of the positive changes in Afghanistan were noted by the delegates of the International Meeting of Solidarity with the Afghan People held in Kabul in June 1980. The meeting, sponsored by the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation was attended by delegates from 22 countries and many international non-governmental and religious organisations, as the World Fellowship of Buddhists and the World Peace Council. The meeting expressed support for the Afghan people carrying on the struggle for peace and progress and for a political settlement of the situation in the region.

The peoples of developing countries reaffirmed their solidarity with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan at the 10th session of the Presidium of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation held in November 1981 in Kabul.

6

The major positive changes that occurred in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan at the new stage of the national-democratic April Revolution are the result of the consistently revolutionary, creative activity and guidance by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. A major event in the party's history was the adoption of the new

Rules, which define the PDPA as the highest form of political organisation, a new type of party, and the vanguard of the working class and all working people in the republic. The PDPA Rules say that the party's activity is based on principles of scientific revolutionary theory, and expresses and defends the interests of the working people of Afghanistan.

At the new stage of the revolution the PDPA has overcome many difficulties and temporary setbacks and rallied the more politically active and advanced patriotic sections of society for the defence of the country and the revolution. The successful undertakings of the party were facilitated by the constant efforts of its leadership to restore the atmosphere of trust, unity and revolutionary principles in the PDPA, to find new organisational methods of work, to raise the ideological and political level of the party cadres and strengthen discipline in the party at all levels.

Besides, the consistent implementation of the resolution on ensuring observance of revolutionary law in Afghanistan, adopted by the Political Bureau of the PDPA Central Committee in November 1980, helped achieve the goals set for the new stage of the April Revolution.

The PDPA Central Committee has concentrated relentlessly on strengthening party leadership and building up the country's armed forces, border troops, security service, and detachments for the defence of the revolution, increasing their efficiency, and improving their material and technical supplies and steeling them ideologically and politically.

Addressing the fifth plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee in March 1981, Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the Central Committee, said that when the new stage began in the April Revolution, the party grew stronger organisationally and numerically (largely due to the inflow of new members from among workers and peasants), its social base expanded, the party functionaries grew more experienced and efficient and the number of its politically educated activists increased. The PDPA's prestige among the popular masses had grown. During the latter half of 1981 about 10,000 candidate members became members. Of these, 40 per cent were workers, handicraftsmen and peasants (in the economically advanced regions of the country the figure was 75 per cent).

January and February 1982 saw the preparations for the first national conference of the PDPA (its convocation had been announced at the seventh plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee in December 1981). That party forum was to adopt the PDPA Action Programme—a basic document of revolutionary power for the near future. Party conferences were held in the towns and in the provinces. Delegates to the PDPA conference were elected.

The conference was convened on March 14, 1982 in Kabul. It was attended by delegates of workers, peasants, intellectuals, servicemen—of all sections of Afghan society, of all its peoples. The 841 delegates to the conference represented 62,800 members and candidate members united in 1,656 party organisations.

Addressing the conference with an opening speech, Babrak Karmal told those present that the conference had received messages of greeting from fraternal revolutionary parties. He read out the greeting from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which said that the CPSU Central Committee and all Soviet people, following the profound traditions of Soviet-Afghan friendship and guided by the principle of international solidarity, resolutely supported the revolutionary people of Afghanistan in their striving to build a new society.

In the report on the draft of the PDPA Action Programme and the tasks of strengthening the party and consolidating its ties with the people, Babrak Karmal told the conference that the main strategic goal of the first PDPA Programme (adopted in 1966)—the winning of political power—was achieved. Now, he said, the party was faced with new tasks which were to be formulated and ways of their solution were to be found. This was the chief purpose of the conference. To that end, the party needed a new policy document, an action programme which would serve as the basis for rallying the party members still closer and mustering all forces for accomplishing the tasks of the national-democratic revolution and defending its gains.

The report noted the historic importance of the social, economic and political changes that had occurred in Afghanistan after the April Revolution. The domination by a handful of oppressors—the richest landlord aristocracy and usurers—had been abolished.

The main political achievement of the April Revolution was revolutionary people's power. This power, Babrak Karmal said, was at the same time the chief political instrument of the revolution, for it ensured its expansion and deepening in the interest of the broad popular masses and a reliable protection of the revolution from encroachments by domestic and foreign counter-revolution and reaction.

The April Revolution, he said, had laid the foundations of an entirely new political system in Afghanistan. This system incorporated (apart from state bodies) the National Fatherland Front—a support for the working people's power in Afghanistan.

The report said that the backwardness and underdevelopment of Afghanistan were temporary. Effecting progressive economic improvements in the interest of the people and with their direct participation and carrying through a programme of deep-going social and cultural reforms, the PDPA was convinced that the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan would become an economically and socially advanced state in the foreseeable future. To achieve this, the party intended, in keeping with its Action Programme, to pursue steadily the course towards a democratic solution of the agrarian question and to build advanced industry.

The purpose of the Action Programme is that during its implementation the vital interests of the whole people should be met. The PDPA's goal is that all the peoples and tribes of Afghanistan, big and small, should be drawn in material and cultural progress for the first time in the long history of Afghanistan, that all of them should be guaranteed full equality and be given opportunities for an all-round economic, social and cultural development. The PDPA deems it imperative that all that is best and most valuable in their rich cultural and historical legacy should be preserved and developed and their religious, cultural and historical traditions be respected.

Since a great part of the population in Afghanistan is illiterate, or almost illiterate, the educational work done by the party and the social organisations which are members of the National Fatherland Front is of great importance, for it helps to spread political awareness among the working people, build up their patriotic unity, wipe out illiteracy, and draw broad masses of the population in the defence of the gains of the April Revolution.

The main direction in the PDPA's political activities is the maintenance of close ties between the party and the people. Herein is the source of the PDPA's power and vitality. In approving its Action Programme, the PDPA is guided by a clear and simple goal—to make the people happy and their motherland flourishing. This is the purpose of the April Revolution and of the PDPA's activities.

The revolution in Afghanistan, Babrak Karmal went on, caused frenzy and frantic resistance on the part of imperialism and reaction. People are dying in Afghanistan because of the fratricidal war provoked by the counter-revolutionaries and acts of violence and terror committed by them in the country, and because of the large-scale outside interference and the unprovoked and undeclared war and aggression being waged against the DRA for the restoration in the country of the rule by a handful of exploiters overthrown by the people. All this hampers urgent social and economic reforms. Therefore, the primary task facing the party and revolutionary power today, stressed Babrak Karmal, was to complete the rout of the armed counter-revolution, to establish and reliably secure the revolutionary power in the localities and ensure a lasting civil peace in the country.

The normalisation of the situation in Afghanistan, the strengthening of the revolutionary regime and the defeat of the armed counter-revolution will greatly contribute to the stabilisation of the situation in the region, in the whole of Asia, and in the rest of the world. This would help provide conditions for peaceful coexistence among states and mutually beneficial cooperation among them, for the benefit of all the peoples.

The main aspects in the approach of the PDPA and the DRA Government to international issues are consistent actions for peace in the Middle East and South Asia and in the whole world. In this context, said Babrak Karmal, the state sovereignty and independence of the DRA and its people could be reliably secured only if fraternal friendship and fruitful cooperation with the Soviet Union continued and grew stronger. The PDPA and the revolutionary government of the DRA lay much stress on promoting relations and cooperation with all countries of the socialist community, strictly observe the Charter of the United Nations, reaffirm their invariable adherence to the principles of the non-aligned movement and, at the same time, express determination to shape its relations with all states on the basis of mutual respect for state sovereignty and independence, equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The PDPA and the DRA Government will work consistently for building up the unity of all peoples in the common struggle for peace, detente, disarmament, prohibition and ultimate liquidation of nuclear arms, for friendship among peoples, democracy, human rights and social progress, for creating a lasting atmosphere of cooperation and trust in the world, and for the solidarity of the peoples in the struggle against the forces of imperialism, aggression and reaction.

The PDPA and the DRA Government will do all they can to promote friendship and cooperation with Muslim countries and peoples. To that end they continue the search for peaceful ways, through negotiations with its neighbours—Pakistan and Iran— of solving the international problems facing Afghanistan today.

All the speakers at the conference who joined the discussion of the report by Babrak Karmal unanimously backed up the proposals and conclusions it contained. The participants in the national conference of the PDPA unanimously adopted the party's Action Programme and the appeal to the people of Afghanistan.

The Action Programme says that it is aimed at turning the DRA into a modern prosperous state with developed agriculture, at building a sound and fast-growing industry in Afghanistan, and at strengthening and expanding the public sector. The working class of Afghanistan is a section of society which is more rapidly increasing and is better organised, while the peasants constitute the largest section taking part in progressive reforms and fighting vigorously for the revolution.

The Action Programme stresses the need to establish one comprehensive system of defending the revolution and the people, comprising the army, the border troops, the security service, militia, detachments for the defence of the revolution, and tribal volunteer corps.

The defence of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan is the chief goal of the PDPA's foreign policy. The cornerstone of this policy is promotion of close friendship and traditional cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community.

During the time passed since the national conference of the PDPA the role of the party has increased in Afghan society and state. By the summer of 1983 its membership exceeded 90,000 (65 per cent of the PDPA members and candidate members were aged under 30). Speaking at the 12th Plenary Meeting of the PDPA Central Committee on July 3, 1983, Babrak Karmal noted that a new factor—a far-flung system of party organisations and committees—had been created in the DRA and was functioning well, constantly increasing its role.

7

Despite the positive changes that occurred since the start of the new stage in the April Revolution, the situation in Afghanistan remained tense. This was caused mainly by the stepping up of undeclared aggression launched against the republic by the forces of counter-revolution, international imperialist reaction and its allies.

In 1980-83, armed revolutionary units, extensively aided from abroad, operated in Nangarhar, Gilmend, Herat, Parvan, Farah, Baglan, Badakhshan, Qunduz, Balkh, Jowjan, Faryab, Badghis, Qandahar, Kabul, Bamian, Logar, Kapisa, Samangan, Wardak, Takhar, Nimruz, Ghor, Kunar, Zabol, and Paktia.

Counter-revolutionaries destroyed crops, granaries, and killed livestock; burned farm buildings and dwelling houses, food storages, and ruined irrigation systems, which had been built through generations. As estimated by Afghan experts, the total damage caused by counter-revolutionaries to agriculture exceeded 1,500 million afghanis in 1981 alone.

They burned down several lycées and about 1,200 schools, blew up bridges, attacked truck columns which carried food, clothes and medicines to the civilian population. Attempts were made to hijack Afghan airliners. Bombs were planted and exploded in the premises of Kabul University. Factories and mines were raided, boring machines, diesel power stations and radio stations were put out of operation. Oil and gas pipelines were blown up.

Striking on the sly, mostly at night, counter-revolutionary terroristic and sabotage groups killed activists of the PDPA and progressive mass organisations, high-ranking party and government officials, teachers, students, schoolchildren and the ulemas who had refused to cooperate with them, and other people. The terrorists wanted to create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the country, to frustrate progressive social, economic and cultural reforms and prevent a stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan.

Some outstanding public figures, organisers and leaders of the National Fatherland Front fell victim to the terrorists. The terrorists murdered retired general Fateh Muhammad Farkemishr (who had spent over 20 years in prisons before the revolution) and Maulana Abdul Hamid, imam at one of the largest Kabul mosques, a well-known alim in the country. They killed Sayed Muhammad Amin, member of the DRA Revolutionary Council; Wali Yusufi, Deputy Minister of Higher and Vocational Education, and Khan Karabaghi, a popular folk singer.

Supported by imperialist powers and some reactionary regimes in the region, the counter-revolutionary forces did not give up attempts to destroy the gains of the April Revolution.

The undeclared aggression against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was escalating. The peace proposals of the revolutionary government on a political settlement were rejected. Thus, constructive proposals advanced by the Afghan Government on May 14, 1980, and August 24, 1981, evoked practically no response from the USA and its allies, though the proposals covered the main foreign policy aspects of the settlement problem.

Centres for coordinating armed actions against the DRA were set up in Peshawar and Quetta (Pakistan). New bases and camps for training sabotage and terrorist detachments cropped up. The terrorists began to be trained by foreign instructors. In the summer of 1980, the then Foreign Minister of Iran Gotbzade openly declared that Iran delivered and would continue to deliver weapons to Afghan counter-revolutionaries. At that time President of Egypt Anwar Sadat announced his readiness to provide sabotage and terrorist groups with arms.

In July 1980, leaders of Afghan counter-revolutionary organisations paid visits to the capitals of a number of West European states where they negotiated deliveries of weapons. They were satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations, as they themselves admitted. In the autumn of 1980, Sabhatullah Mojadidi, a well-known leader of Afghan counter-revolutionaries, visited the United States to raise funds for the counter-revolution.

As is seen from numerous bourgeois press reports (and also from recently published studies by American, British, Canadian and Pakistani political writers), Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and some other countries in the region rendered, and still render, lavish financial and other aid to the counter-revolutionary organisations entrenched in the territory of Pakistan close to the Afghan border. These resources are used for purchasing arms and ammunition, including anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft weapons. The Pakistani press has written on many occasions about aid to Afghan counter-revolutionaries and their sabotage and terrorist organisations provided by a number of conservative regimes in the Middle East and by numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations of Britain, Japan, the USA and the FRG. Reports to that effect appeared in the US and West European press.[136]

The opening of a representation of the counter-revolutionary Afghan Press Agency in London late in 1980 cannot be regarded otherwise than as complicity with the Afghan counter-revolution and gross interference in the internal affairs of the DRA.

The government and the people of Afghanistan and progressives the world over regarded the repeated statements by the US administration spokesmen in 1981-84 on the intention to continue to deliver weapons to the counter-revolutionary detachments operating in Afghanistan as crude interference in the DRA's internal affairs.

There are numerous facts proving that the total volume of financial, military, technical and other aid coming to Afghan counter-revolutionaries from the imperialist and reactionary forces has been steadily growing, which is evidence of their intention to go ahead with the undeclared aggression against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

All these actions, grossly violating international law and the UN Charter, tend further to aggravate the situation around Afghanistan and in the whole of South-West Asia, putting up new barriers in the way of political settlement, for which the revolutionary government of the DRA, supported by its allies, has been striving. Various projects of "neutralising" the DRA, advanced now and again by leaders of the diplomatic services of some Western states, pursue anti-Afghan aims.

The Presidium of the DRA Revolutionary Council was compelled to enact the law on universal military service on January 9, 1981, providing for a call-up to the armed forces of Afghanistan of men aged from 20 to 40.

The PDPA Central Committee and the DRA Government have carried extensive work at the new stage of the April Revolution to strengthen the armed forces, which are now better organised, trained and equipped. New commanding officers have been trained. The Afghan army has inflicted heavy damage on the counter-revolutionaries, destroyed many of their bases and strong points and seized large amounts of weapons and ammunition. Hundreds of armed counter-revolutionary detachments, whose members let themselves be involved in the fratricidal struggle, have laid down arms.

At the same time the revolutionary authorities of the DRA have always advocated a reasonable combination of military and peaceful ways and means to normalise the situation in the country, stop the bloodshed and establish peace. The PDPA Central Committee and the DRA Government amnestied those who had given up armed struggle against the motherland. They held talks with leaders and rank-and-file members of counter-revolutionary detachments misled by hostile propaganda, helping them to go back to peaceful life in their native land.

8

At the new stage of the April Revolution, just as in the past, the peoples of Afghanistan have been invariably relying on the friendly aid and support of the Soviet Union.

The growth of all-round and mutually beneficial ties with the USSR has become most important for the DRA when the undeclared aggression against the Afghan people escalated, and when the USA and many other capitalist countries discontinued or cut drastically trade, economic, crediting and financial relations with Afghanistan. The shipment of Afghan exports and imports across Pakistan and Iran have become extremely complicated. Some international economic organisations (actually controlled by US monopolies or transnational corporations) have ceased all aid to Afghanistan or reduced it to the minimum.

In these conditions cooperation with the Soviet Union (and also with the other countries of the socialist community) has enabled the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to hold out against imperialist pressure and to overcome many negative effects of what had amounted to a blockade of the DRA by the imperialists, and even to use most effectively the national economic potential for its own benefit. After the April Revolution, specifically after the start of its new stage, Soviet-Afghan relations have reached a new level and become fraternal relations of revolutionary solidarity. The mutually beneficial trade, economic, technical, scientific and cultural cooperation between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan has grown. It has been constantly expanding and improving, acquiring a new content, and becoming more dynamic and stable.

Mutually beneficial cooperation between the DRA and the USSR offers Afghanistan a wide access to the newest technology and modern scientific knowledge. This cooperation has a very important role to play in strengthening state sovereignty and political and economic independence of Afghanistan, in the development of the public sector in all the major sections of the national economy. It assists Afghanistan in fulfilling various plans of social, economic and cultural advancement, thereby enabling it to overcome the hard legacy of the pre-revolutionary past, eliminate backwardness, improve living standards, and build up its defence potential. Finally, cooperation with the Soviet Union, conducted on an equitable basis, offers Afghanistan every opportunity for defending its legitimate interests and demanding equal trade and economic relations with capitalist countries.

Thus, the USSR accounts for 54 per cent of all foreign loans and credits granted to the DRA. Over 160 national economic projects have been built, or are under construction, in Afghanistan with Soviet aid. They account for 70 per cent of the industrial output of the public sector. The Soviet Union renders considerable aid in the development of Afghan agriculture, power engineering, transport, communications, housing construction, and in the training of the national personnel so badly needed by the country's growing economy. About 70,000 skilled workers have been trained for Afghanistan with Soviet aid. The USSR grants Afghanistan loans and credits on easy terms, to be repaid by traditional Afghan export goods or by a part of the output of the enterprises built with Soviet aid. In 1979-83 alone, the DRA's trade with the USSR more than tripled.[137] The conditions for goods shipment between the two countries greatly improved after the motor-road and railway bridge was built across the Amu Darya in May 1982.

Other socialist countries, too, render economic and technical assistance to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

The official friendly visit by Babrak Karmal to the Soviet Union in October 1980 gave a fresh impetus to the growth of Soviet-Afghan relations. During the talks the head of the Afghan state and Soviet leaders discussed the further development of cooperation between the two countries, major international issues and the situation in the Middle East. In a joint statement the USSR and the DRA expressed their intention to encourage the growth of Soviet-Afghan friendly ties established in the days of Lenin. Both sides stressed the complete identity of views on all the questions discussed and spoke in favour of a political settlement of the situation around the DRA, which would have a positive effect not only on the situation in the Middle East but would also help improve the political climate in the world. The sides emphasised that to achieve such a political settlement it was important that any interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan should be stopped and that appropriate understanding should be reached between the governments of Afghanistan and its neighbours, Pakistan above all, on the basis of the DRA Government's proposals.[138]

In December 1980, another agreement on economic and technical cooperation between Afghanistan and the USSR was signed in Moscow, together with a protocol on free Soviet aid to Afghanistan in training the national personnel which the DRA so badly needs. New agreements on the expansion of Soviet-Afghan economic and trade cooperation and on Soviet assistance in the DRA's social and economic advancement were signed in July 1983 and in March 1984.

The peoples of Afghanistan are not alone in their struggle for social progress, freedom and independence. As was pointed out in the Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th Party Congress, "Afghanistan's sovereignty, like its non-aligned status, must be fully protected".[139]

The 26th Congress of the CPSU reaffirmed the Soviet Union's preparedness to withdraw the Soviet military contingent, with the agreement of the Afghan Government, after the infiltration to Afghanistan of counter-revolutionary terrorist and sabotage groups from abroad would be completely stopped. Dependable guarantees are required that there will be no new intervention against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The cessation of the undeclared war against Afghanistan should be sealed by agreements between the DRA and its neighbours.

The 26th Congress also stated that the Soviet Union was prepared for constructive talks on international aspects of the Afghanistan issue through a separate settlement of the situation around Afghanistan and also through a discussion of problems concerning the DRA in the context of the security of the Persian Gulf.

On November 15 and December 23, 1982, and on February 15, 1984, Babrak Karmal met with Soviet leaders in Moscow. On March 14, 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CC CPSU, received Babrak Karmal in the Kremlin. In their comradely talk they discussed the basic aspects of Soviet-Afghan relations and the situation around Afghanistan. Both sides condemned the continuing aggressive actions of outside forces against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and stressed the inalienable right of the Afghan people to shape their life as they saw fit. They expressed the belief that stopping the armed intervention and any other outside interference in the affairs of people's Afghanistan was an important condition for consolidating peace and stability in Asia. Both sides were pleased to note the growing friendly relations between the CPSU and the PDPA, the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and reaffirmed their willingness to further strengthen these relations.[140]

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, being a sovereign non-aligned state, pursues an active policy of peace aimed at promoting international cooperation. In the international arena, the DRA enjoys increasing support and recognition. In 1985, seven years after the national-democratic April Revolution, the DRA maintained diplomatic relations with almost eighty countries. And the fraternal ties of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan with 103 Communist, Workers' and revolutionary-democratic parties and national liberation movements and organisations have been developing well.

One hundred and thirty years ago Engels wrote that revolutions are a mighty motive force of social and political progress which helps the country in which it has been accomplished to "pass in five years over more ground than it would have done in a century under ordinary circumstances."[141] The April 1978 national-democratic revolution in Afghanistan overthrew the autocratic, exploiter regime and created conditions for carrying out radical changes in a short period of time and advancing the country from backwardness towards progress. A new epoch, one of revolutionary renewal of the ancient country, has begun in the history of Afghanistan.

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123. *The Kabul Times*, July 4, 1977, p. 1.

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127. In Badakhshan, for instance, before the April Revolution there was one doctor per 70,000 people and one hospital bed per 15,000 people. The province with an area of 46,710 sq km, which roughly equals that of Denmark or Switzerland, had only one electric power station and no paved roads.

128. *Anis*, Kabul, April 19, 1980.

129. A large part of these counter-revolutionary leaders emigrated from Afghanistan and established their organisations in Pakistan long before the April Revolution, during the rule of Muhammad Daoud, and even King Muhammad Zahir Shah. Thus, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a major organiser of the aggression against the DRA, had emigrated to Pakistan in 1976, after an abortive attempt to stage an ultra-right mutiny against the Daoud regime. It was at that time that he formed the so-called Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hezbe-i Islami Afghanistan) by uniting several ultra-right groupings. Burhanuddin Rabbani, another counter-revolutionary leader who had fled Afghanistan, founded a counter-revolutionary Islamic Society of Afghanistan (Jamiat-i Islami-ye Afghanistan) in Pakistan, also in 1976. In 1971, long before the April Revolution, another counter-revolutionary leader, Sibghatullah Mojadidi emigrated from Afghanistan. Before his arrival in Pakistan he had

spent several years in the United States and Western Europe.

130. For details, see: "The Speech by Babrak Karmal at the Opening of the First Agricultural Conference in Kabul on February 26, 1980" (*Anis*, February 28, 1980).

131. Already in the first days in power the Babrak Karmal Government released over 15,000 prisoners, including many outstanding Afghan intellectuals, scientists and writers. On January 1, 1980, a general amnesty was announced on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the PDPA. The punitive service established by Hafizullah Amin, the so-called Proletarian Intelligence Organisation (KAM), headed by Amin's nephew Asadullah Amin, was dissolved.

132. In April 1984, there already existed a few hundred trade unions in Afghanistan, their total membership exceeding 170,000.

133. For details, see: *Anis*, September 16, 17; October 4-7, 1980.

134. The decision on setting them up was taken at the First Agricultural Conference held in Kabul on February 26-28, 1980.

135. *The Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan*, Kabul, 1980, pp. 4, 7-10.

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